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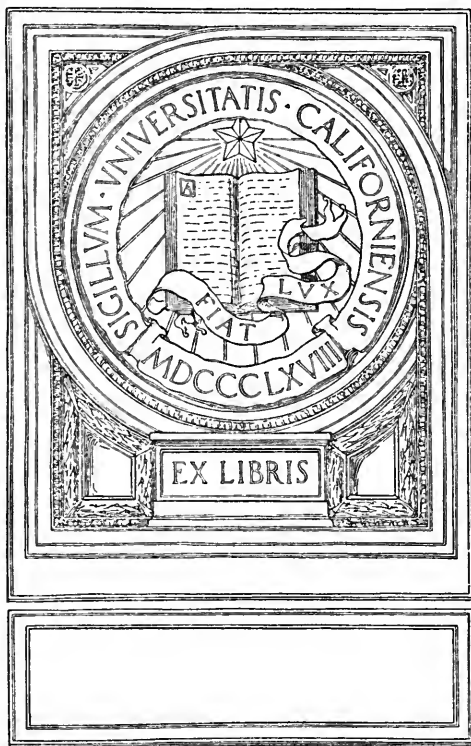
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DELPHIC DAYS

SNIDER

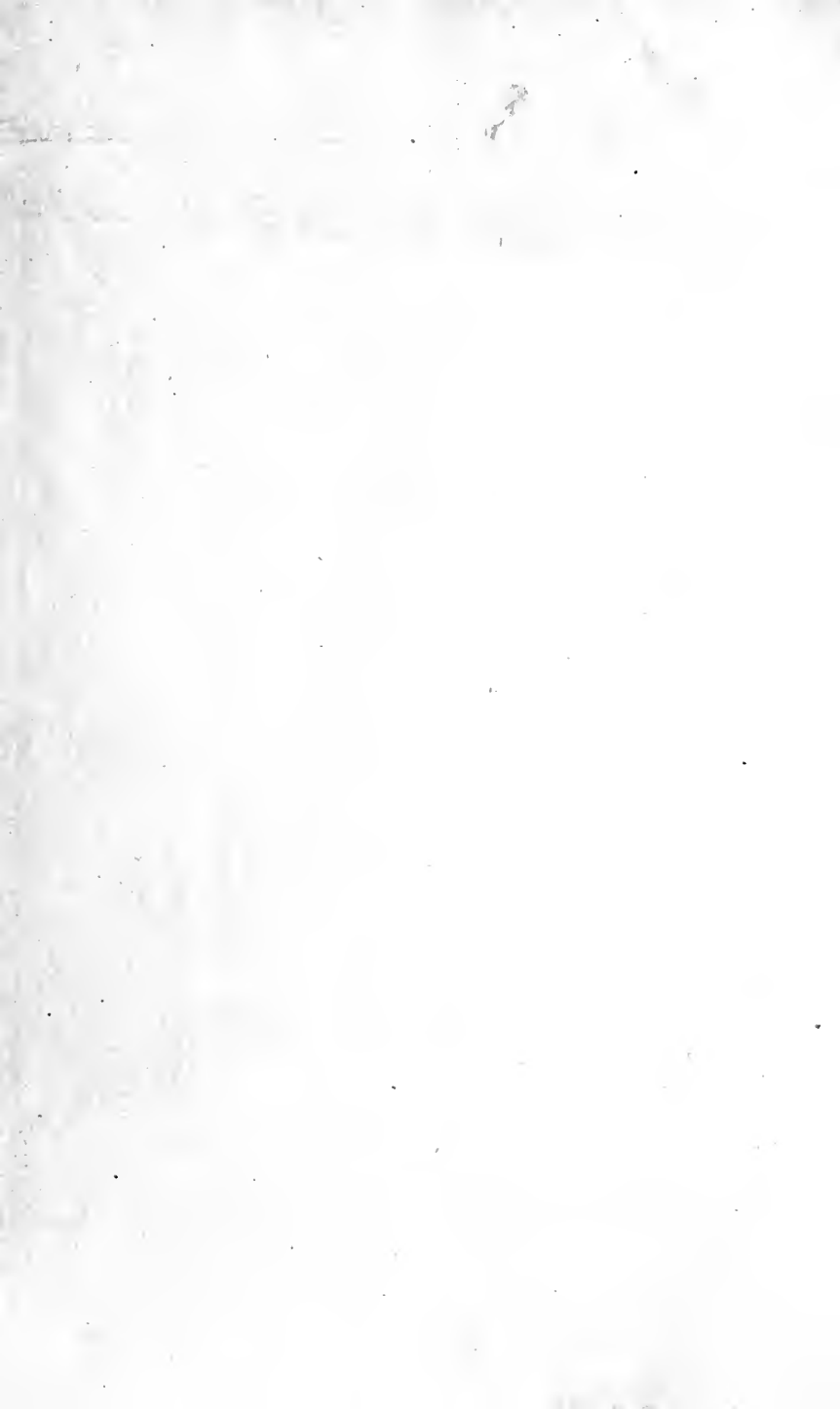
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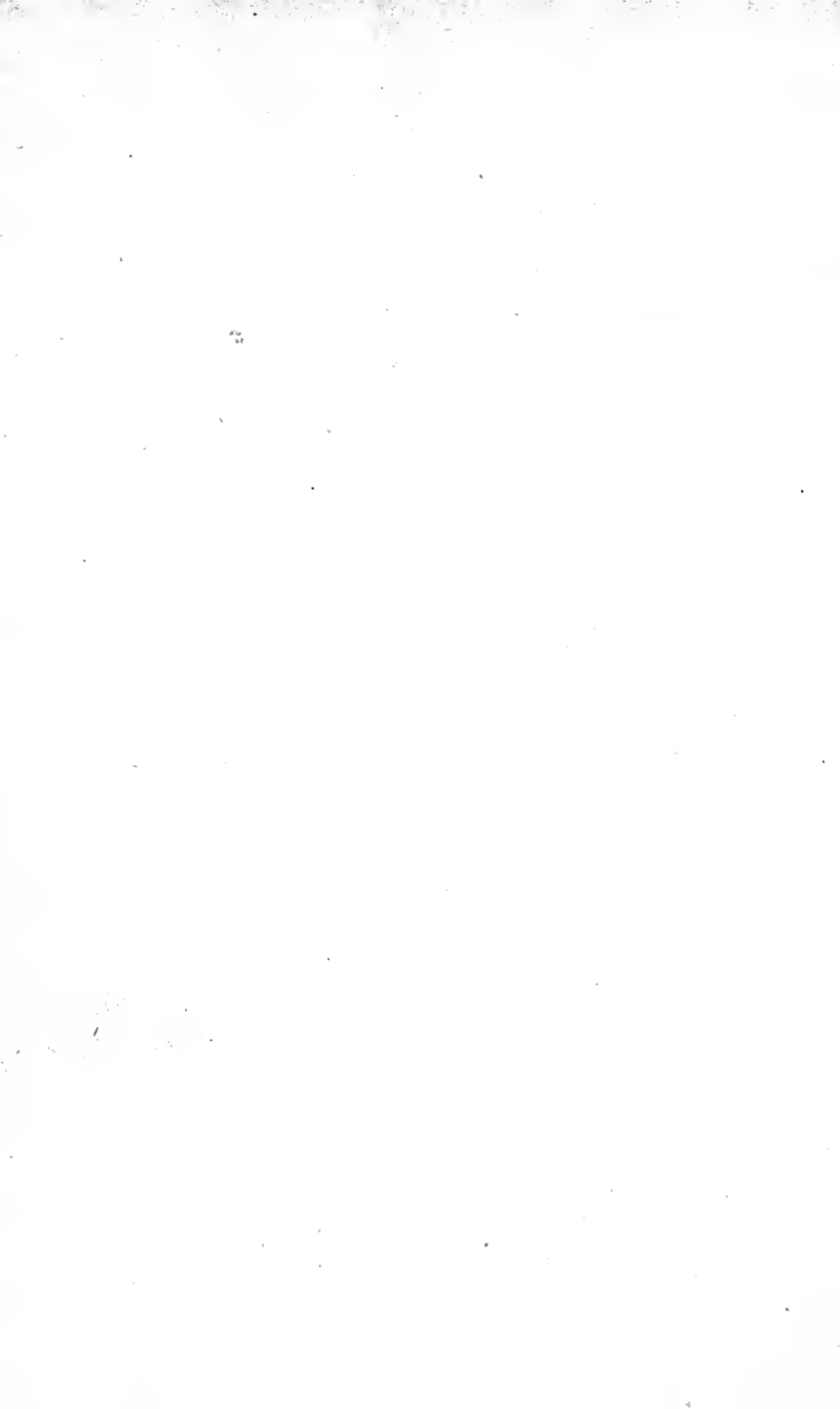


To Mr Charles Goldhaus with
the friendly regards of the Author.
Denton J. Snider.

St. Louis Apr. 20th / 1880.







DELPHIC DAYS

BY

DENTON J. SNIDER.

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Book First.

Delphi.

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CYCLET FIRST.

1.

LONG has my shallop been rocked on the beautiful Bosom of waters
Rising in ripples of joy over the heart of fair Greece ;—
On the Corinthian Bosom, bared to the touch of the sunbeams
That are wreathing its swell softly in flashes of gold.
But the coquettish light sport of the sea with its dimples of laughter
Quickly behind me I leave,—here now I leap on the shore
Where is the road through vineyards and olives and hills up to Delphi :
Held in a hymn of the God, thither I pass to his shrine.
From the world's other side, from the banks of the turbulent River
Always rushing in rage down to the realms of the Sun,
Where the vast flow of the waters doth sweep by the fens of Cahokia,
Thence I a pilgrim have come over the ocean and earth.
Wild is the turmoil that restlessly whirls in the stream of the River,
Fierce are the insects that swarm through the great vale on its banks.
But now in truth I have come to the much-sung home of the Muses,
Now the thing I behold when may be spoken the name.
Look! the glistening heights of Parnassus rise up in the distance,
Over the land and the sea still they are sending their gleams.
With that top for my mark I joyously start on my journey,
For the way thither, I know, lies in Apollo's bright realm.
First are the vineyards preparing their drops of mild inspiration,
That put courage in hearts for the ascent of the mount ;
Not unmindful I pass them, for many a leaflet and tendril

Here are woven in wreaths which the young Bacchus did crown,
And the vine is beginning to sip from the soil a sweet nectar
Which it will hold to our lips when has been mellowed the year.
Next come the Olives, full of sweet poesy, in a vast orchard
Strown all over the plain, sporting in sunbeams and song.
Often I stop for a moment to snatch from the tip of a leaflet,
Just a few notes of a hymn which I hereafter may sing ;
And I intend every day, as long as I linger at Delphi,
To return to these trees that I may breathe of their strain.
Many a hearty young Olive is here full of lusty rejoicing,
Many a trunk that is old, wrinkled and bent to the ground,
Yet with rich fruit it is laden. Runnels of water are playing
Round the roots of the trees, lispng a lay with the brink,
For they are bearing the dew of the Muses adown from Parnassus :
Joyous the Olives upspring to the refrain of the brook.
Also the trill of the birds that are singing unseen in the branches
Joins in the laugh of the leaves tuned to the lay of the rill ;
Every twig in the orchard is bent with Parnassian songsters
Matching their voice to the clime in the new season of spring.
Some of their throats are breathing the sunniest note of the panspipe,
Some have the clarion's blast rousing the heroes to war.
But oh behold—in the distance there rises a beautiful image
Through the long lines of the leaves, flitting around 'mid the trees ;
'Tis the Greek maiden, busy at work, yet arrayed in white garments :
Scarce can I rightly discern whether that shape be a dream.
Into the palm of her hand each berry appears to be flying,
There it nestles in glee, softly, unwilling to leave ;

Nor would I, were I in its place, desert those embraces,
In their soft pressure caressed would I forever repose.
Even a song she intones to the chime of the brook and the leaflets,
Now deepest thrills can be felt through the Parnassian world.
Thus for miles I walk in the musical Olives to Krissa,
All is attuning my soul for the approach to the fane—
To the great Delphian fane where lie the domains of the Sungod,
To the Castalian fount where are the Muses enshrined;
So I have entered already the presence of Gods in my journey,
And within me a lyre throbs in a rapturous strain.

2.

Onward from Krissa I pass through the winding and rock-pointed
pathway
Toward the Delphian heights,—still 'tis the walk of an hour.
Easy the road is not, but gladly I grapple the hillside,
Clamber about through the stones, yet with Parnassus in view
Always glimmering white in the distance far up above me :
'Tis a beacon of snow held there aloft in the skies.
Dusk, the dark Lady, has thrown her first veil of thin gauze o'er the
mountain :
Still from its silvery top falls a soft splendor of light.
Now she commences to lay her dim hand on the face of Apollo,
Who near his Delphian home loiters there under the sea
Loth to quit the abode that he loves. But look down in the valley
Where the glad Olives erewhile danced with the beams of the sun;—
There the black dragons of Night are creeping in stealth up the hillside

Out of the valleys below that are now filled with their coils.
 'Mid the cliffs they will soon have come up to me, still I trudge forward
 Dreaming of things yet unseen at the great shrine of the God.
 Hark! there rise behind me loud notes of melodious laughter,—
 'Tis the maids who return home from the orchards below;
 All day long they have stooped in hard labor, still they are merry:
 Work intoxicates here, flushed with the draughts from the hills.
 So I stop on my way, by that group I am soon overtaken,
 E'en in the dark I can see folds softly white falling down.
 But as they hear, when I greet their approach, the foreigner's accent,
 Quickly they strike up the hymn while to the village we pass.
 So to the song of the maidens grandly I enter high Delphi,
 In a procession of old, like a great pomp of the God.
 But that rhythmical chant with its gait has attuned all my fancies,
 Now they move in long strides round the Parnassian heights;
 Scarce can I bridle their gallop into the short-stepping English,
 Always they reach out their feet spurning my modern restraints.
 'Tis the command of the God, I feel I must march to his quickstep,
 And I must sing to his note while here I tarry his guest.

3

What is that strain which is sung by the maids as we enter the hamlet?
 Some refrain I can hear throbbing by spells in the song.
 Sas agapó, sas agapó—all' entrépomai na sas eipó;—
 Thee I love, thee I love—but I shame me to tell thee;—
 Such is the version I make causing my heart to rebound.
 Love, then, is the sweet theme to whose music I march into Delphi,

And to its beats I must step after an apron and robe—
 Apron of red that flames in the night like the fierce torch of Eros,
 Robe as of Parian folds, white as Parnassian snow.
 In deep faith I follow the omen that heralds me onward,
 Gone is all my fatigue, of a new world now I dream.
 On my ankles so jaded fleet pinions appear to be growing,
 And by to-morrow methinks they will be ready for flight;
 Like the feathery-sandaled ~~Hermes~~, messenger swift of Olympus,
 I some message shall bring down to our Earth from the Gods.
 Sas agapó, sas agapó—all' entrépomai na sas eipó :—
 Thee I love, thee I love—but I shame me to tell thee ;—
 Their confession is sweet, it I shall take to my heart.
 So already young Eros is here, I can see him flying before me
 Unto Apollo's high fane—both of these deities rise.
 Who can resist two Gods, each one of them being almighty ?
 I shall not try to resist, nor do I wish to resist ;
 Both my worship shall have as long as I stay here at Delphi,
 Sunlight and love are my prayer, mingled together in song.
 Sas agapó, sas agapó—all' entrépomai na sas eipo ;
 Thee I love, thee I love—but I shame me to tell thee ;—
 You are ashamed then to tell what you already have told ?
 Oh subtle Loxias, doubler of words, thou hast doubled their meaning,
 Wiles already hast put into the hearts of these maids ;
 For they say that they love, and yet too they say they don't say so ;
 What a puzzle is this which they are singing to me ?—
 Oh you are women, for what you refuse, just that you are granting,
 And you deny you confess what you confess you deny.

Is it not strange to say what you say, then say you don't say it,
And by concealment reveal what you declare you conceal?
There—the ambiguous oracle on me hath breathed already,
And a riddle inspires just when I enter his town.

CYCLET SECOND.

1.

All the Gods here at Delphi begin to assemble around me,
And of some share of my life each is securing command;
Each is breathing into my heart subtle need of his worship,
And there is now not a God whom I would blot from my soul.
So I must build a great Pantheon where they shall all dwell together,
Gods and Goddesses too, all without chiding or strife;
And with the hymn I shall build it, the ancient material of Orpheus:
Every stone of the fane shall be itself a new song,

And it shall move to its place in the pile to the sound of sweet music,
Sung to the beat of the hymns as in the dance of the youths.
See the chorus of marbles as from the depths of the mountain
They are coming with joy into the light of the sun.
All the edges drop off as they fit their tread to the measure,
Like the white Graces they move to the clear note of the song.
Joyous are even the stones, as they spring into order and sunlight,
To have left the dark realm where Chaos sits in the earth,—
Stones most deeply attuned, to harmony hewn by that music:
Each on the other doth rise, building a glorious fane;
Now the marbles join hands in a row of far-shining columns,
Round the bright temple they move in a perpetual dance.
So these hymns that I build move round my Pantheon stately—
Naught but a chorus and song, all the day long in a whirl.

2.

Reader, it is my desire to have you go with me a-walking
Only this one afternoon dipped in the balm of the clime;
To the harmonious choir of Nature we joyous shall listen—
Such as she forms for herself here on the Delphian hills.
Out of the windows of rock are peering the eyes of the flowers,
Wishing to see the fair world, wishing themselves to be seen;
They make the tapestry which is now hanging adown from the hill-tops,
All their bright colors you see melting to beauty the cliffs.
Over them hover Parnassian bees, the merry musicians,
In a thousand fold hum striking the note of the flowers;
All with variance, from the big drum of the bumble-bee's pinions

To the small pipe of the fly in yon acacia's blooms.
 Air and sky to the melody are most deeply accordant,
 They have a festival too, for they are married to-day,
 And they now kiss in the bridal embrace, while lofty Phlounmbouki
 Blandly his shaggy old sides sways in the waves of the song.
 Leave me not out, I have also my place in the symphony Delphian,
 For my body is changed into a many-stringed harp,
 Which is struck by the throbs that are sent from the soul of this Nature,
 Till I am one with it too, chanting the music I feel.
 Even grouty old Prosy would turn to a hymn here at Delphi,
 And his lips be a lyre touched by the hand of a Muse.
 But look up, for yonder now leap the white folds of the dancers,
 Youths the bright circle have formed; then all the maidens appear
 In a procession, slow-stepping, until they entwine in the chorus,
 When the hymn doth arise, tuned to the step of the dance.
 Simple the strain, but it melts to one movement the voice and the body,
 And it unites with the notes which the glad flowers prelude;—
 So that they all with the elime here one deep harmony utter,
 Tuned as of old to the chords strung on Apollo's sweet lyre.

3.

Any little thing pleases me now, and it pleases me greatly,
 For a Delphian content softly me holds in its arms;
 So whatever I see, I am rocked to a musical measure;
 On my path are unchained thousands of images glad
 As I walk round this hill to the sun. Just now, yonder raven
 Is the delight of mine eye as he doth glide down the vale;

Look at his happy high flight, yet he shows not the smallest exertion,

While the deep gloss of his back sports in the dance of the rays,
And to me, the beholder, reveals subtle splendors of color

As he changes his place mid the bright play of the beams.

But the thing which rejoices me most is the ease of his movement,

Not a feather he stirs in his bold flight through the skies.

Wide-extended his wings are, still he doth fly without flapping;

Simply he moves, you would say—but who can tell how he moves?

Effort appears not, lost in the triumph and grace of his pinions;

Struggle no clog puts on *him*, lord of the paths of the air.

Always from tip to tip in full swoop his wings he outstretches,

Yet in repose he remains during his rapidest flight.

See! now he rises without one stroke—but now he is falling,

Slowly descending beneath where are the Olives at play.

Suddenly I fall with him, here from the side of this mountain,

Not a feather I stir as through the sunbeams I sail;

No exertion I make in order to fly, not a struggle—

Simply I move of myself, knowing not why it is so.

Do you not see I am flown—without effort flown down to yon orchard?

A fair phantom is there guiding the wings of my soul;

So I fly like the raven, without one flap of my pinions—

Nay, without pinions I fly, sinking away in the leaves.

4.

Many are the delightful sounds that are uttered by Nature,

Many too are the joys that she instils in her tones;

But of all of her sounds, the one which to me is most pleasant

Is the fall of the rain as it doth beat on the roof
Over my head. In the day-time driven home by the shower,
Long I sit with my hand under my chin, and list
To its song and its dance, for its drops have come down from Parnassus,
Rhythmical drops out of clouds born on the Muses' high seat.
Thus they are dowered just from their source with symphonious
movement,

As a chorus of youths step to the pipe and the drum.
By the fire I recline on my rug 'neath the tiles of my cabin
Out of the rain's merry dash, still I can hear all its notes.
Then I am led by them off into thoughts of a musical cadence,
And the whole world keeps time to the soft pat of the rain.
Many a form now comes up before me far distant from Delphi,
Out of the shadows they rise, yet in the gleefullest mood;
Many a shape that is real, and many a vision of poets.
Many an image of joy—all to the beat of the rain.
Fragments of life I live over again, now sweetly attuned,
Though they a discord were once in the refrain of my years;
Hopes of the future too in an harmonious swell overflow me,
Every hope has its wings dipped in the rainbow of song;
Joyous I fly on these pinions over the ways of the ocean.
And the glad hour of return in soft embraces I feel.
Images fall to the Earth from the musical Delphian Heavens—
All have the rhythm of rain heard in the dance of the drops.
But in the night-time, lying on carpets strown out by my hostess,
Love I to glide into sleep to the mild music of rain.
For its notes wind snbtly along through the gates of my slumber,

Enter the palace of dreams playing soft strains till the dawn;
And they gently attune to sweet sounds all my memories errant,
That through the fields of the past wantonly roam in the night;
All my hopes, all my wandering thoughts slip into the measure
Beaten by drops of the rain on the low roof overhead.
Struggle has fled from the soul and life is discordant no longer,
The great universe glides into melodious hymns;
So in slumber the deepest softly I hear the low rainfall,
And I sleep to its notes wrapped in a garment of dreams.

5.

Every morn ere Apollo has touched the high top of Phloubouki,
From the rugs I arise and to my worship I go;
For a still morning prayer I breathe at the fount of Castalia
To the harmonious forms that have their home in the stream;
And I pray them to show to my reverent eyes a small fragment
Of that beautiful world mirrored within the clear depths.
Many a draught I take of the water that laughs from the fountain.
Hands and face there I lave in the cool flow of the rill,
And no cup will I dip for a drink from the brook of the Muses,
But I fall down on my knees, prop my two hands on the stones,
And then slowly my lips I press to the crystalline water:
When I feel a soft kiss from a bright maid in the stream.
Fain would I sink to that shape and be lost in tender embraces,
Live a transparent life there with her under the wave,
Or, attended by nymphs, expire on the couch of her mosses:
But with a touch to her lips, quick from my worship I rise.

For thus early are passing this way the maids of the village.

Down to the Olives they pass, mingling their labor with hymns.

Also they take a cool drink from the stream as it bubbles pellucid,

And with their finger tips moist tinge their fresh cheeks with its drops;

Then the roses come pulsing into the lilies by heart-throbs :

Long I stand by the rill—slyly I glance in each face.

Thus I do every sunrise, and I am always rewarded

With some image of joy that me illumines all the day.

So a maiden this morning leaped on a rock by the wayside,

Drew up her horse by the bit, gave a quick spring and a whirl ;

For a moment she flew through the air, then lit in the saddle

Like a bird on a branch—wings she must have, I am sure.

Bravo ! I cry, and she sends to my greeting a proud smile of triumph.

Then away, away, into the Olives she speeds

Riding over the rocks down the steep like a bold Palicari :

But she leaves me that smile as the fond toy of the day,

For wherever I stroll, with that phantom I find myself playing.

Through all my thoughts it doth wind, giving them color and mood,

Though they may be on the Earth's other side. Thus it wakes along
with me ;

But in my afternoon nap slyly it enters my dream ;

There amid the absurd irresponsible throng of my visions

It is swimming in glee showing the laugh in a mask.

Fain would I fix its vanishing form of delight in these verselets,

That I may look at it oft, would even show it to friends.

6.

What art thou writing, she asks me, here in the shade of the Olives?

For a pencil and book often I see in thy hand,

Whilst on the paper thou makest strange letters of a strange language;

Quickly they dance through a line, then they turn back at the end.

Restlessly too thou dost stop sometimes with a look of vexation,

As if a God held thine arm from its free sweep to its scope.

But 'tis only a rock that dams for a moment Castalia,

Or a small pebble perchance fretting the flow of the stream;

Yet the sly Muse is soon there and removes the obstruction,

Rapidly then darts thy hand through all the symbols unknown.

So to my fancy there bubbles out of the point of thy pencil

Words like the drops that well up into the Muses' abode.

Also thou seemest at times to count on the tips of thy fingers

That in a measure the lines train to the tones of thy voice;

Thus like the tremulous thrill of the sea they dance in their motion,

Joined in a rise and a fall led by the Graces in hand;

And each word neatly glides into lines of incessant recurrence,

Just as Castalia skips ever along the same rocks,

Though the crystalline flow of its waters be less or be greater,

Though wild droplets may dash out of the stream in their joy.

Read me thy words, I beg thee, e'en if I know not their meaning,

Gladly I hear them move to the command of thy voice,

For they have a rhythmical tread, like the youths of the chorus,

To caramousa and drum daintily stepping in' time.

"Poesy's flatterer sweet, it is well thou knowest not English,"

Modestly then I replied, though I believed all her words.

7.

Yes these lines that I write are quite like the youths of the chorus ;

Many the dancers we see moving along with the step,

Some are better, some worse, and some may be said to be neither ;

Some will fall out of time in the fierce rush of their zeal ;

Some also know not the step in spite of the care of the master,

Whatever pains he may take, they will not tread to his beat.

Some move in time, it is true, but have little grace in the movement.

Some merely walk through the dance to the rude stroke of the drum.

Some are too buoyant in spirit forgetting the moderate measure,

Some are sluggards in gait, e'en sinking down to blank prose.

But there are others—the most of them—beautiful youths of the chorus,

Maidens with soft glowing cheeks, forms of white grace in the dance—

Note them, I pray thee, how freely they step to the sound of the music.

For their fair bodies thrill just to the voice of the Muse

Who now speaks to them out of the fount of limpid Castalia,

And they list and obey all what their Goddess commands.

These make the chorus along with its hymn a glorious vision

Fallen from ages of old down to the hours of to-day;

It in its movement reflects that ancient Greek heaven refulgent,

Though now and then cloudy streaks pass through the sunshine of
song.

Look not at those who are always making mistakes or are awkward,

Though the master may beat vainly and long with his hand,

Nod with his head, e'en stamp with his feet that they fall into measure—

Every misstep that they take throbs a fierce jar in his soul.

But nearly all of the youths have obeyed now, though full of mad frolic,

And they follow the beat with an unconscious light tread.
Backward and forward they move, then around the circle together,
Many a garland they weave, out of their motions inwrought ;
Often a beautiful youth who is placed at the head of the chorus
Leaps in the air and whirls, forming a flower of folds.
First look at all of them, as they are winding around on the greensward :
Then thou singly wilt choose, whoever gives thee delight.
Seek what is beautiful ever, the ugly need not be sought for :
So the dance will delight, for it is joyous and fair.

8.

Oh Dimitri, I hail thee—thou art a poetical being,
Thou wert born a hymn, placid content is thy life.
Musical too are thy hours as they flow in harmonious cadence,
And thy moments of time are little waves of sweet sounds.
Here thou dost lie on this stone, smooth fragment of some ancient temple,
From whose broken forms gush many beautiful strains ;
For they were fashioned by hands that were tuned to the lyre of Apollo
Still the marble breathes notes which from the God were thrilled.
So this stone, too, Dimitri, is a low hymn, in deep concord
With thy nature and life, as I behold thee just now.
Both thou and it are sweetly attuned by the clime to one key-note
Though the instruments are greatly diverse in their kind.
Truly a child of Delphi thou art—of its music and temples,
And thou art one with the rays which thou dost lie in all day.
No wild winds can ever disturb thy serenity's ocean,
As thine eyes half-shut, look into nought but the sun.

Not even cranky old Seismos can shake thy repose everlasting
As on thy elbow propped, resting thy head on thy hand
Thou dost recline on this column outstretched. Let me sit down beside
thee,

And be transformed by thy spell into a Delphian lyre;
For I wish to be played upon here by invisible fingers,
And in the soul of my soul feel the calm strains of the God.
But I must take out my book and my pencil, stung by a gadfly
Which the Muses have sent from yon Castalian brook,
And no rest can I find till in measures I shape what they whisper,
Punishment 'tis, I fear, for an old curse in my blood.
But oh Dimitri, a greater thou art than the maker of poems,
Thou art a poem thyself sung through harmonious days.

9.

Dost thou behold yon tattered cloudlets of film that are flying
Up the valley below as with the wings of a bird?
Subtlest gauze are their bodies, resisting no beam of Apollo,
But their speed is the wind's, with the light gossamer's play.
Millions on millions they hasten, all of them silvery, lucent:
At my feet they now swim as I go round the high mount.
Not unimportant their errand is, if thou couldst but divine it:
Secret duty they have, to them entrusted by Gods.
Guess it thou canst not, though thou endeavor, so let me tell thee:
Hither they hasten to join armies of deep-drenching clouds
Far up Parnassus; round his high top and his sides they assemble,
Till from their watery films grow the dense hosts of the storm.

Thence they descend from the summit with huge sieves of water

Which on the Olives are poured that with much fruit they be hung.
Likewise every bright rill that leaps down the sides of the Mountain,

Will be full in its banks and overflow in the plain,
Bearing its freshness and beauty to all of the vineyards and orchards;
Then too the flowers will spring, dressing the hills in their robes,
For the beautiful spirit of Nature they win from her body,

And they deck her fair form till it doth mirror her soul.
So much comes from these filmy cloudlets when they are gathered
Into drops of the rain or in Parnassian streams.

Look! the Heavens are full of them—at their speed too I wonder;
They in their chase for the top strike the rough sides of the steep
And thus lose of their delicate moisture. How rapt is their struggle
The very uppermost height yonder to gain in their race!

Thus would I say to them: Patience, O little, silvery cloudlet,
Thy gentle drops do not dash where they are lost on the rocks;
Be thou controlled by the hand of a God along with thine instinct,
He will lead thee in time where thou thy kindred wilt join
On yon summit whence is sent down the sweet dew of the Muses:
Thence every pasture of Earth verdant will grow from thy drops.

10.

Tired of the Muses' incessant throng I fled to the mountains,
For they embraced me too hard in the nuptial clasp of their arms;
Round their fountain I loitered, and down their streamlet I sauntered;—
Too many kisses they gave, I could not stand so much love.
So to the cliffs I wandered, trying to think about nothing.

And I succeeded quite well for the first time that I tried.
One empty day I sought—one which was utterly empty,
That I might lay it between other bright Delphian days
Always filled to rich overflow with the fond whispers of Muses :
Now my feeling was blunt with the excess of delight.
Much too long had I tried to look at Olympian radiance ;
Both of my eyes were blind from the fierce gleams of the Gods.
So their presence I shunned, I ran from their haunts, from their temples,
Void of the Gods I would live just the short course of the sun.
To the Korykian cave I retire, to the core of the mountain,
There to remain in the dark freed from the shapes of the light ;
Into the gloomy recesses I enter with flickering taper :
Look at this arch overhead—'tis after all some fane ;
And behold these crystalline figures built by the droplets—
Hundreds of images rise dripped from above to the Earth.
So they are here too, those bright forms are here, and dwell in their
temple :
It is Pan, I should say, with all the train of his nymphs.
Truly if man will not build their abode, it is built by kind Nature.
Even their statues she forms deftly from rocks of the mount,
Setting them up in their temples. Escape from the Gods here in Hellas !
Here they were born in the past, here they at present appear ; —
In dark caverns they shine as well as in realms of the sunlight :
If thou dost flee from a God, thou dost but rush to his arms.

CYCLET THIRD.

1.

Let me calmly think over what gave me to-day the most pleasure,
Now that the hours have passed and I am stretched on this rug,
Ready through cloudlets of slumber to enter the portal of dreamland :
Thither to carry along something of joy is my wish ;
For I shall keep it and sport with it all the lone spell of the night-tide,
And I new colors shall weave through the bright play of its hues.
What is my choice, then, out of the throng of beautiful visions ?
'Tis a maiden I saw spring on her horse from a rock
At the side of the road as she went from the village this morning,
For her image and feat with me have gone all the day.
On the air she appeared to fly with invisible pinions —
From the top of that stone, till in the saddle she lit ;
Then old Sorrel starts off on a trot as she takes up her spindle,
Also the distaff she holds—draws out the cotton thereon ;
With her fingers she sorts it and pulls it to suitable thinness,
Then gives the spindle a whirl till the small fibres be spun ;
Next she skillfully reels the white yarn on the spool of the spindle.
Till the clew has been made ready for shuttle and loom.
That is the maiden for me—each moment of life is an action,
Brings to the world a new deed, which, be it small, yet is good.
So all the while that her horse moves rapidly down to the Olives,
She is spinning the thread for the fair folds in the dance ;
Each of the threads has the glance of her eye and the touch of her finger

Which they will carry along into the garment when wove.
Thus they musical ever must be with her skill and her fancy,
For they all will declare what she has laid in her work ;
When the folds of the vestment shall wave on the youth in the chorus.
Glorious hymns they will sing, which were inwrought of her soul ;
Every thread will join its own little strain to that music
That from the garment doth rise, tuned to the play of the folds.

2.

Out by the Delphian way to Arachoba Kalligynaika,
Town of the beautiful maids, under Parnassian tops,
Slowly I clomb, when far up the mount I beheld a red apron
Dropping in flames to the ground over a lap of white folds.
Both of the hues stood out on the air afar up the mountain ;
Form I could scarcely discern in the twin colors' embrace.
On white modesty's folds there lay the redness of passion,
Chaste was the view to the eye, yet ever challenged to love.
Wings of crimson appeared to rest on the down of a bosom ;
Bird it was to the look with its bright plumage enskyed.
Bird it was and loudly it sang on the perch of the vineyard,
Till the sides of the mount sweetly were flooded with song
Overflowing the Olives with music mellowed by distance :
Vocal all Nature it made—vocal it made me too.
Nightingale I was going to say—but in verses of poets
That poor birdling has sung till it has lost all its voice.
There I look at the tints and list to the lay of Parnassian songstress,
Till together they melt into harmonious tones ;

Some dear pain fills her throat and sets all the hill tops a-throbbing,

Still the warm notes have a soul white as the robe of the maid.

Love now ingrains with its blush those folds of modesty candid—

So speaks softly her dress, so too speaks softly her song.

See! another has joined her, having the same red pinions

Lapped on the fleeces beneath; now there are two of the birds;

Yet another draws near, then another, Oh, still another:—

Now a dozen or more stand on yon ridge far above.

Give me, Oh fancy, some image in which to imprison these singers,

That I may take them along when I Parnassus shall leave,

And be able to list to their strain in my journey forever:

Simply say, 'tis a flock—flock of bright birds on the slope,

That together high up there have lit, the red-winged, white-bodied,

Nature's boon to this clime, born of the sun and the heights.

Note the color of voices attuned to the color of garments,

Hinting the passion of youth tempered with chastity's snow.

Hark to the choir! their lay is of love with its pang and its pleasure;

All of the flock are alike—have but one note in the heart.

List! that note I have too in my heart—I am going to sing it—

Merely a bird would I be—now I fly up to that flock.

3.

Wherefore are all of the maids on these hills arrayed in like colors?

Why has each thrush in the field ever the same kind of plumes?

Why can sing but one lay the nightingale hid in the hedges?

Nature has given the law which all her children control.

She has appareled the shapes that move on the slant of this mountain;

Delphian instinct they have, deeper by far than design.
These bright robes are one with the sun and the sky, with the hilltops—
Here they grow from the soil, any thing else can not be.
So I saunter along by the road and gaze at the colors ;
Red on white from the heights fall in mine eye with a spell,
And attaches some strong invisible thread to my heartstrings
That I am drawn to yon maid out of my way up the steep.
There for the raindrops she busily loosens the earth of the vineyard
Whose fine rootlets must sip ere of the wine we may sip ;
Labor has modeled the turn of her limbs with the skill of a sculptor,
While the Graces have drawn every line of her shape ;
Gentle exertion, the subtlest of painters, has penciled her features,
Dipped in Parnassian airs are all the hues of her face.
As I approach, the red garment she grasps, on the white she adjusts it—
Still she is but a bird pruning her plumes for display
When peradventure some male of her kind that way may be flying :
Now the same tints I observe twinned in her visage and form,
For her cheeks are two roses imbedded in garlands of lilies—
Passion's rapturous flush chastened in snowy restraint.
What can Nature here mean,—the sly dame—by displaying these colors ?
Still I ask of myself, springing with joy up the steep.
Thou art a fool, a blind fool—was the answer I heard to my question,—
Look at thyself and think what thou art doing just now.
Has not the male been allured by that bird to fly up this hillside
Through the enchantment of hues ;—what better reason than this ?
When she drew thither thine eyes—still more, when she drew thy foot-
steps—

That was the aim of this dress, its divine end was fulfilled ;
For to a bird it transformed thee, so that thou flew'st up the mountain
Where was the apron of red laid on the kirtle of white.

4.

Yonder the crow swims down through the river of air in the valley,
River that fills the high banks built out of mountains of stone ;
Sportively now he flaps his black wings in the glare of the sunshine,
Then he whirls over for fun right on his back in the air,
And appears to be falling. But with a caw he soon catches
Wind in his plumage of jet and with the sunbeams he skims
Gaily along in his flight ; more boldly he oars too his pinions,
Even he glides up the rays toward the fierce eye of the day.
That rough note is but laughter ;—again he whirls over, laughing
That all the world he can fool by a mere feint of a fall.
Some black gallant he is, from amorous conquest returning
Mongst the dusky young fowl that have their home in these hills.
So the crow in his gayety sports down the Delphian valley
In a wild play with his wings till to the Olives he sinks :
There the maids are at work, and they also of love are singing ;
Even the crow of the air seems to drop down to their song.
So too I dally in sunshine with Eros whose wings I have borrowed,
Every day I hover for sport, over the Olives upborne,
And at times I seem to be falling—in love to be falling,
But I catch myself soon, high in the air, with a laugh.

5.

Here is, said Yankos, the merry resort of the town—let us enter,
Magazi is its name as thou wilt hear from each tongue ;
Floor it has none—hence be not surprised that thy step is so noiseless,
For the ground has been wrought to a thick carpet of dust
By the tread of the feet of these villagers now for some ages ;
Bow as you enter,—your head else will be rapped from above.
Not a chair can be seen, sit down on this bench at the table ;
Table and bench are adorned, carved in the jackknife's strong lines.
Somewhat dark is the room, from a single low door it is lighted :
Still on a counter displayed see the huge bottles of joy.
Upwards glance—no ceiling obstructs the view of the rafters,
Quinces, pomegranates there hang in the dry orchard of beams.
But let us try these immaculate drops now—drops of pure virtue,
That from the Delphian rocks by the good vine is distilled.
In their fragrance they subtly are breathing the breath of the wine-god,
Who will not leave his old realm though he in poverty come.
This, oh friend, is the temple of Bacchus—temple not ancient,
Where still his worshipers meet, they are assembled here now.
Poor God, how I do pity thee banished to dirt and to darkness
Who dost illumine the soul with all thy flashes divine !
Once thou didst dwell in the light mid pillars of white alabaster,
Many a statue of old with thy young form was imbreathed,
Wound with tendrils and leaves of the grape and crowned with its
clusters ;—
Sculptured oft were thy deeds high on the temple and tomb.
Still oh Bacchus thou livest, on mortals still breathest divinely,

I can see thy old flash here in this rude Magazî.
Now I invoke thy divinity for a sly touch of thy frenzy,—
Glorious madman of Gods, rattl^ε thy thyrsē in mine eyes.

6.

Often sly little Eros I find in the train of wild Bacchus,
Covered with tendrils and leaves, hid in the clusters of grapes;
Then the young rogue peeps out of the foliage which he has stolen,
From his small puffy cheeks flashing light dimples of laughs.
Oft with fair Semele's son he is seen unfolding new pinions,
And he flies after that God, rapidly chasing each draught
As it sparkles down into the soul through the 'ducts of the body;
Love with the thrill of the wine enters high fantasy's hall.
So the weird juice doth glide into every dark nook of our being,
Which it then makes all light with rapid flashes divine,
And with its rapture it touches the body's invisible genius,
Giving a wing to each sense till it mount up to the sun.
Soon the shy Muses, though they be naked, appear to the wine-god,
Showing their secretest wealth to the devout of his train.
All the Nine will pass before eyes that are rapt in his worship,
Seen in their beautiful form only through drops of the wine;
To the adorer true-hearted they come with tender embraces,
Whisper a hymn of their own which he remembers and writes.
Raise the bowl to my lips, advance it full to my tongue-tip,
That its sly power may glide into the soul at a touch;
For I wish to behold the resplendent forms of the Muses,
Their soft whispers to catch dripping Olympian song.

But look here—on the rim of this beaker is balancing Eros,
Flapping his pinions in play, ready to fly at a draught.

7.

The wild throng of the Gods this time has a little unsettled me,
And a confusion divine sports on the throne of my brain;
For too many Olympian guests have knocked at my palace,
Too much divinity here me the poor mortal assailed.
First came Bacchus, the leaf-covered, grape-haired beautiful stripling;
To me he gave a small craze just at the tip of the tongue.
Eros followed hard after, and soothed me with soft little wing-strokes,
Him I fondled and hugged but by his arrow was stung;
Still from that puncture I suffer a sly indefinable tickle:
Henceforth I must take care how I caress the mad boy.
Bacchus and Eros, I find now, share the domains of Apollo
Here in his Delphian seat, they too are perched on these rocks
Wine doth offer its beaker of humorous rapture to wisdom,
Love hurls a torch in the soul, kindling each faculty high.
Nor is absent the Muse from the hallowed home of the Sungod,
All of the Sisters lurk still in Castalia's stream;
These too gave a low rap at my door and demanded admittance,
While the wings of the boy fanned balmy air in my face.
Thus many Gods are driving me—all of them often together,
Often singly they come, pulling me hither and yon,
Whence among them great strife. But Eros is always the victor,
For the Nine him assist turning his flutter to hymns,
And a delicious melody flows from the flap of his pinions

Which even Jove subdues to the sweet lull of its spell.
Yet I know not if Eros it be who has help from the Muses,
Or if the Muses it be who are by Eros inspired.
Ask me not to decide, I pray, the difficult question,
If I sing for my love or if I love for my song.
Both are divine, I assure thee, and both have my fervidest worship,
And a temple to both I shall erect with the hymn ;
Yes, Love is divine, but divine are also the pearl-dropping Muses,
Either may grapple my hand—then I am led by a God.
Nor forget in the Delphian background stands ever Apollo,
Who well knows what he does, whether he love or he sing.

CYCLET FOURTH.

1.

Holy Castalia is not deserted, it still has a worship,

Though divinities new here are enthroned out of place ;

For the dark stoled Saint now presides in the bright-dropping fountain, —

The fair fane of the Muse yields to the shrine of Saint John.

Still there is joy in the thought that continually here is devotion,

That the beauty antique gleams through the ages of night.

But the black robe of the Saint supersedes the white folds of the Goddess ;

Long are his hair and his beard, gloomy his thoughts are and grim ;

Skull and bones lie around him, while he on eternity mammers,

Starved into tatters of flesh, wrinkled in form to a rag.

This is the body that made revelations of beasts and of monsters

Whose grisly offspring have slimed many Parnassian rills.

Banish Oh Psyche forever the brood of dragons and devils,

The dark brood of Hell born in the brain of the Saints,

Who have changed the beautiful world to a jungle of goblins,

Till the horrible craze seems to have made us all mad.

What a pity that now they possession should have of Castalia,

And such monsters should breed right in the Muses' glad stream !

So have the clear voiced Sisters been frightened away from their waters.

Always to sing they refuse when they with horror are filled.

Oh the Saints atrabiliary, dismal their thought and their raiment,
 Dark they are to the eye, equally dark to the soul.
 And I confess, the angels are not to my liking, though radiant,
 They are some neutral thing, though all their wings be of gold,
 For they seem but of one sex, or what is the same thing, of no sex;
 If they be woman or man, surely it does them no good.
 But the nymphs I adore, as they show their forms in the fountain,
 Often I look at them bathe, sporting their limbs in its splash,
 Nor do they hide the white body away in the dungeon of garments,
 As if guilty they were, having divinity's form.

2.

What is that sound re-echoing out of the gorge of Bagenyi
 When the Castalian fount shows the first crystalline throb?
 Oft the dull thud is repeated and smites the rough side of the mountain
 'Tis the blow of a maul in the firm hand of a dame
 Who is washing and pounding the folds into whiteness and order;
 Even the folds must be beat ere to new music they move.
 Then they will glide most winsomely into the rhythm of sculpture,
 And they will glow in the dance on the fair youth as he treads.
 Just behold those vigorous blows from the arm of the washer:
 Seeing a thing made clean gives a delight to the Gods.
 Many Nausicaas now are preparing their own and their brothers'
 Irreproachable robes for the gay dance at the feast.
 But Oh think—this is poesy's fount, this is the rill of Castalia
 Which is now used by the town cleansing its filth in the stream.
 What do the Muses say to it as they arise from the water?

Are they, I wonder, in wrath, or do they sanction this use?
But a voice, playing over the surface, thus spake from the brooklet:
It is right, it is right, and I approve every blow.
Many a stain besmirches the raiment of sunny Parnassus;
Great is the need just now that it be thoroughly bucked.
Pound the garments, Oh washers, with all the fierce might of your muscle,
For they again must be clean ere we the Muses arise.
Dash them and drench them and rinse them in the clear depths of Castalia
That they not only white but also musical be.
Long and carelessly have they been worn, until the white drapery
Seems the dress of despair, rumpled to numberless rucks.—
So I look at the washerwomen there wielding the beetle
Pitiless on the grim filth with irrepressible brawn;
These are now the true nymphs of the stream, full of anger and vengeance
That the bright robes have been soiled with all the dirt of the earth.
Many a feature they have that tells of their pedigree ancient,
Still their limbs are undraped as in the ages of old;
Full the bare arms are of swift-sweeping, merciless tendon and muscle,
And there peers the nude thigh from the short kirtle below;
But still fuller the breasts are, reflecting their dance in the water,
Softly imparting their swell to the white folds in the stream.
Sad necessity—nymphs of Castalia transformed into washers,
Turned to Furies of thews, forced to belabor mere filth!
But for the festival wait, when the youths shall move in the chorus,
Then the glory of brawn from every ruffle will gleam,
And the folds of the garments antique will leap in their splendor,
For once more they are new, fresh from the Muses' clear rill.

3.

On the edge of the chasm behold yon child in the distance
Gathering flowers alone, lost in the joy of the hours.
With its own sweet thoughts it pleasantly seems to be sporting,
As it doth skip round the rocks, busy from blossom to bloom.
While I look at its play I feel indefinable longing,
For a young voice I can hear echoing over the seas.
Nearer it comes to the perilous edge of the cliff—and yet nearer :
I am afraid lest it fall—what a fierce pang in my breast !
Still along on the brink of the chasm in peace it is playing ;
I would shout, but a bridge built of one voice can not reach.
Now it sees a new flower inclining just over the margin
With a cup of fresh red ; thither it springs and bends
Over that preeipice deep of hundreds of horrible fathoms,
Reaching out its small hand for the bright gem of the cliff.
Agony gives a rude wrench to the heart—it seizes the fancy :
See ! down, down the child falls into the depths with a plunge !
Brains are dashed on the rocks that bloodily now are bespattered,
Crushed are its flesh and bones to an indifferent pulp ;
Red with the stain has become the pure flow of the rill of Castalia,
Its white pebbles are fouled with the thick blotches of blood.—
Hold, oh Fancy, for thou hast defiled the stream of the Muses,
These are thine own ghastly shows, hideous spectres of death,
For the child is safe—now it runs in delight up the hill-side
Quite away from the brink ; also the flower it has,
Which along with a nosegay it joyously brings to its father,

Who in an Olive's fresh shade rests from the heat of the day.
 Oh grisly Fancy, Castalia cannot endure thy horrors,
 From grim phantoms she flees back to her cave in the rocks.
 One drop of scarlet thrown into her stream will stain her clear waters ;
 Stay thy sanguineous hand, smear not the Muses with gore,
 For the white folds of their robes most quickly will show the dark
 blood-spot,
 So that the Furies they seem, not the mild Goddesses, bright
 With these rays wherein they now dwell mid choruses happy,
 Here in the Delphian world ruled from Parnassian tops.
 For each song of the Sisters is closely inwoven of sunshine,
 Every note is a joy hymned in accord with the beams.
 So let me banish forever all blood, all terror and darkness :
 Only with Phoebus henceforth I am determined to dwell.

4.

At the waters of joyous Castalia I met an old woman,
 Often she crossed herself as she was passing the brook ;
 From her lips of lean wrinkles darkly she muttered a prayer
 To the Saint in the fount where the bright Muses once dwelt.
 I must acknowledge, the presence here of that weazen old woman,
 With the thought of that Saint, drove all the Sisters away,
 And called up in my soul the waters of bitter resentment,
 So that my Delphian mood nearly was drowned in their surge.
 When she had ended her prayer, quickly she turned and addressed me :
 Why, oh stranger, I ask, do you not make sacred signs
 Of the Cross on your breast as you pass St. John's holy chapel ?

Infidel art thou—a Turk—thus to neglect Christian rites?
Yes, I fear it is true, thy belief is not mine—I answered:
In my heart I abhor here such a gesture to make,
Or now even to think of the Cross with its horrible torture:
Any thought of the kind hurls into chaos my days.
Here at Delphi there is no death—only life in its beauty—
Save the death through that Cross, death of the Muses and Gods.
I am one with the Earth now, and with the goodness of Nature,
Simply I live through the hours filled with the joy of her strain;
After this life I think not of realms of tumultuous anguish;
Nor do I wish for myself any one's death, not Christ's;
Time was once when I hoped for de cease or desired some Redeemer
For me to die, and perchance thus to relieve me of pain;
But I live now in this Delphian sunshine, I sigh for no Heaven,
Merely I wish to remain blent in the harmony sweet
That doth swell from the two great worlds without and within me:
Double that chorus of worlds, but their deep music is one.
Very different once, it is true, were my thoughts and my feelings,
And again they may change in the still beat of the years.—
I do not think the old woman could know quite what I was saying,
Still I continued to speak, talking perchance to myself:
Do not suppose that harmonious living is not a religion,
Though it be not thine own, though too its source be remote.
Like some melody sweeter by distance, the old Gods of Hellas
Softly arise and attune to a new concord my life,
And at this moment they are commanding most deeply my worship;
The Castalian nymphs, too, I adore from my soul,

And far above all others I daily commune with Apollo,
Who still loves his old haunts, though he unkinged must come.
Look up yonder at Delphi—think what Apollo once made it—
For he made it the soul in the fair body of Greece,
And he decked it with all of the splendor of shrines and of temples :
Look at it now, the poor clump—'tis the abode of the Saints.
So, good woman, to these do not ask me to offer devotion ;
Here I will see the old Gods as they once reigned from these heights.

5.

In the moonlight yonder uprises to heaven Phloubouki,
All alive it appears under the beams of the night ;
Monsters of darkness are crawling far up to the perch of its summit,
While its cavernous sides house many hideous shapes.
Not for the world would I enter this hour the gorge of Bagenyi,
Out of fear of the ghosts which there abide in the dark.
Now is the reign of Artemis, sister of bright-faced Apollo,
But the clear God has fled from the dim earth and its nooks ;
Men are asleep until his return, avoiding the Goddess,
Not a fold can be seen in the faint glimmer of rays ;
Hushed are also the hymns of the maidens, the children of sunshine,
All the birds are at rest, save the dull brooders of night.
But the fantastic huge monsters of chaos break loose from the mountain,
Out of the caverns they come whither they fled from the God :
For the sister, though gracious, is weak and can not control them,
Can not the dragons control freed from the light of the sun.
At her spell the whole brood doth seem to leap forth to existence,

Under her smile they are born, born in her mystical beams.
Oh high Apollo, well wert thou named the slayer of Python ;
The huge serpent was pierced by the keen arrow shot forth
From thy bow all light ; of old it was slain here at Delphi,
And this rock was transformed into the eye of the world.
Once again, oh day-god, place on the bow-string that arrow,
Slaughter the numberless brood which has been reared in the night,
And the infinite throng of phantasmas, the monster-begotten,
Pierce—and restore thy bright reign as it was once on these heights.

6.

On this hill-side who built the first temple to far-darting Phoebus ?
An old story it is, ancient is too the dispute.
Three are the legends which are now gracefully asking our credence :
Out of the authors of old let them with prudence be scanned.
This is the first report, that the structure was built of the laurel,
Tree of Apollo's love—whom he once wooed as a maid,
Beautiful Daphne, changed to a tree and then wrought to a temple :
This account I believe, for it is worthy of faith.
I myself have built a small fane out of leaflets and branches,
In it I sing to the God many a laurel-crowned hymn,
That the harmony sweet of the Muses may float in his presence :
There he gives me to dwell viewing his glorious face.
Then the second report of it comes, and this I must tell thee :
It was built by the bees, architects first of the world,
And its walls they made of their cells, and the mortar was honey,
Sweetest of artists they build all of their instinct to form.

Then they filled the fair home of Apollo with stores from the flowers,
So that the dew of these bees sweetened the bread of mankind.
Also this story I can not deny, for I ate of the honey,
And the same structure beheld where dear Apollo resides.
Yet the third account too I believe—it was builded by Vulcan—
On the Olympian heights fair it arose in his shop.
Many a line can be seen that was drawn by his compass.
All the stones have been hewn by a divinity's skill,
To a deep subtle music taking their place in the building,
Chanting when they are there soft unaccountable hymns.
Round this fane is forever reposing a chorus of sculpture,
Forms of the Gods above, copied from thence into stone ;
And this temple entire was borne down to men from Olympus,
In a transport divine guided by Hermes the swift ;
For it is modeled, they say, from palaces mighty of marble,
Which there repose on the heights in a perpetual day,
Reared by Vulcan himself when he built the Olympian city
For the bright Gods to indwell ;—whence they come down to our
earth.
All the reports I believe—all three are worthy of credence—
And they are true I maintain, if thou but know what is true.

7.

In the old ages was Delphi prophetic, doubly prophetic ;
Destiny distant it showed both for itself and the world.
What it to others in vision foretold was what itself snufferd,
Always the arrow turned back into itself that it shot.

What it saw in the sport of the hours, was but its own image,
For in its soul was the type of the Great One and the All.
So in revealing itself, it the universe ever revealed—

What else could it declare but what it had in itself?
Such is the prophet, alas! and such is the painful prediction,
'Gainst his own heart he directs what he presages to man,
For he too is a man. When beautiful Hellas in passion
Turned against its dear self arms that were meant for its foe,
So too Delphi was turned, of its own foreknowledge the victim,
For it also was Greek and was involved in the doom.

That irreversible word which was uttered by priestess enraptured,
Held the dim fate of herself, also the fate of the fane;
She was rent in her soul by the might of the same strong convulsion
Which she saw in the land, since it lay too in herself.
Brother was turned against brother and Delphi was turned against
Delphi—

Then fair Hellas was lost—Delphi the seeress was lost.
Look at these ruins which peep here—they lay in the foresight of Delphi,
Still she could not escape what she so clearly foresaw;
Nor yet could she by silence avoid her dolorous duty:
When to be prophet she ceased, then she had ceased to be.
Strange is, oh prophet, thy lot,—what thou seest and sayest to others
Is but thyself and thy fate which thou behold'st in the Hours.

8.

It is night. From below to the highest Delphian summits
Darkness covers the earth, Silence has opened her reign.

No one would say that here was once the bright home of Apollo,
So completely extinct are all the beams of his face.
Yet behold a single dim light far off in the valley,
Where the Olives are—what can it mean, do you think?
'Tis the camp-fire lit by a shepherd—Wallachian shepherd,
Who sojourns for a time that he may pasture his flock
On the thyme that sprouts in the spring from the sides of Parnassus :
Stranger he comes from afar, seeking the fragrant herbs.
That small light with its rays bores a hole through the darkness to
Delphi
Till it reaches the eye ; by it white fragments I see
Faintly trying to send some gleam of their ancient perfection
As they peer out at my feet, with their bright smile broke in twain.
Here the shepherd remains for the festival fair of the spring-tide
And on the slant of the hills mingles his herd with the flowers.
But when the summer has come he flies to his home in the mountains
Toward the distant North, shunning the rage of the Dog.
There he recounts to his rustic neighbors who gather around him,
What he has seen far away—wonders of climate and sky,
Wonders of ruins festooned with many a song and story,
Dowered with magical spell by the weird hand of a God.
Notice his light, how it shimmers across the waves of the darkness !
Now it doth seem to go out ; now it doth flicker anew
Dimly, as if 'twere a beacon tossing about on the ocean ;
Now a blaze it sends up flashing the tips of the cliffs.
Yet all alone it shines in the valley—no other shepherd
Hither has come from abroad for the Parnassian food.

But I can see in that flamelet, though distant, the Olives rejoicing,
Its small glow they feel like the approach of the dawn ;
Also Castalia leaps in its light with a fresh laugh of gladness,
As her diamonds are lit by a soft ray in the night.
Still 'tis only a wandering flash by a stranger enkindled,
Throwing its sheen for a time over the village and hills ;
He will sojourn in the valley merely along with the flowers,
Then for his home he departs ; with many yearnings increased
Is his herd, and is fed to sleek fatness on thyme of Parnassus ;
Fragrance also is borne from the sweet flowers and herbs.
So the rude shepherd—the distant Wallachian shepherd,
Builds a small camp-fire here where was the Muses' abode.

Book Second.

In the Olives.

CYCLET FIRST.

1.

IN fair Hellas there grow many joyous young sprouts, but the Olive
Was the first love of my heart; and will remain the last.

See how it shoots up there on the hill-side and in the valley!

Youth is the name of that tree, beauty its form and its life.
Softly it waves in the wind that comes like a breath from Parnassus—

Wind sweetly tuned in the twigs, sent from the heights by a Muse,
Who outpours her melodious tones in the rustle of branches,

And imbreathes all her grace on the young leaves in the dance.
So each tree, each leaflet doth move in the merriest humor,

Yet they all move at once, forming a chorus of joy
Over the fields, far down through the vale, to the limit of vision,
Turning their silver-green robes to the mild sway of the breeze.

Everywhere on the branches there hang multitudinous berries,

All in a laugh and a dance with the gay leaves and the limbs.

Some are ripe with dark-brown visage, and ready to gather,

Often they fall of themselves into the lap of the earth;
Others are young, quite young, and still cling to the arms of the mother,
Though their cheeks have a flush, turning to blushes of love.

Why do the Olives rejoice so? Under them are the Parnassian maidens,

Wafted by thoughts of the dance like the light leaves of the tree
In the wind. The fruit from the ground and the branches they gather—

Fairest fruit themselves, tinted by airs from the hills—
All with fluttering hearts, as they think of the chorus to-morrow,
For then a festival is, with the bright dance at the trees.

2.

What a choir of birds I hear as I pass through the Olives !

Spring has just come down the vale, now it is tuning all throats.
Each glad songster doth seem in this grove his voice to be testing
On the sunny bland air made for the note of the heart.

Thousandfold are the tones that through one another are darting,
Winding around in soft turns ; tender with love they embrace.

Yet the whole orchestra deeply to one limpid note is attuned,
Though some discords may rise o'er the clear lake of the sound.
What is the strain that they carol ? List, till we catch its fine pulses—

'Tis the gladness of youth throbbing in hymns at the spring.
Thousands are also the songsters mid the new leaves of the branches,
Each one piping his best, each with some trill of his own.

Some have a loud full voice heard afar, but it has little beauty,
Some have a small low note, but it of sweetness is full ;
Some utter sounds that ferociously hiss with the hiss of a serpent,
Even the sound will bite though but of air be its fangs ;

Some are old, going back in their strain to the ages heroic :
Oft deep voices I hear, chanting, I fancy, of Troy.

Some are young, just fledged, and can not yet fly from the branches,
Or if they did seek to fly, down they would flutter to earth.
Still they all sang—the Greek songsters—sang in melodious measures,
Though there were many engulfed in the grand swell of the whole.

Each seemed trying to drown all the others in oceans of music :

But I could hear one voice sweeter than all the rest

And much*stronger ; for in some of its notes it rang like a bugle,

Then it would melt in its strain till the soul gushed at the eye.

So they continued to sing—that tuneful Parnassian army,

Mid the poetical leaves adding their sparkle to song.

What are the songsters trying to do ? As I think, I shall tell thee—

They are trying to win places of perch in this grove,

That they forever may dwell in the glittering palace of Olives,

And be heard of all men, haply, who stroll through the trees.

Often concealed from the eye they are chanting melodious roundels ;

On the dark berries they feast, nourishment rich for the song.

All are my joy, both the broad-winged poets and pin-feathered nurse-
lings,

For each one of them sips music and mirth from the clime.

I too am going to stretch out my wings and hop in the branches,

Also my throat I shall tune though it should fright all the grove.

3.

Hear the glad voices that pass down the Delphian way in the morning !

Who are these people ? I ask,—why do they sing on the road ?

Pickers of Olives they are, now hastening into the orchards

Where yon silvery creek spans with its girdle the dale.

All day long they must stoop, still joyously chant they a ditty,

As they pick, one by one, berries that lie on the ground.

Toilsome yet merry the task is, since labor is seasoned with gladness,

So they love their fatigue, for 'tis the food of their mirth.

Thus they sing as they toil, and they mid the Olives are happy,
Ere the Parnassian tops yet have been clomb by the sun ;
Maidens are most of them singing along with the birds before sunrise,
While the long shades of the hills stretch from the East down the
vale.
Just where the road is crossed by the runnel my stand I have taken :
There the paths from the town all come together in one ;
There I look at the merry young throng and receive friendly greeting
From cerulean eyes set in a frame of gold hair.
The fresh hummers continue to pour from the hives of the village
For an hour or two ; each in mine eye drops a smile,
That is shed from the lips as invisible dew of the Graces ;
'Tis their alms to my heart, which a poor pilgrim has come.
Still the one has not passed yet, the right one ; impatient I loiter
Till she arrive from the heights, winged as a sweet morning dream.
To her glance I am bound, and by it am borne to the Olives,
There now with it I sport, happy the rest of the day.

4.

List to yon maid who is singing far up on the side of the mountain,
Where the vineyards hang, slanting adown with the steep ;
All alone she works, and a hymn she attunes to her labor,
While she is trimming the vines for the bright nectar of Fall ;
Searce her shape can I see, but her voice rings over the valley,
Wafting its notes through the air, till they rebound from the hills
That lie opposite ; then, most lightly they fall to the Olives
Where underneath the young trees hundreds of maidenly hands

Are now busy—busy in picking the harvest of berries ;

Though they are hid by the leaves, still I well know they are there.

Hark ! it is the response ; not unheard have the notes of the maiden

Fallen into that grove ; list to the echo from thence.

For from the trees another refrain swells up to the mountain ;

Many voices there are, melted by distance to one.

Resonant, clear and full is the strain from the Olives ascending,

And it responds to the first with a deep fervor of song.

What are they singing of ? Love—the oneness of man and of woman ;

Mouths by nature are twain, but the fond kiss makes them one ;

Two pairs of eyes with one glance, and two pairs of lips with one
promise—

And in the breasts of the two one happy heart with its throb.

Let the bodies be double, within them is only one feeling ;

Voices may also be twain, but the sweet song makes them one.

Love has transmuted into one harmony both of these echoes,

Swift-winged Eros now sweeps over the mountain and vale.

Thus the vineyard answers the Olives, the Olives the vineyard ;

Though far asunder in space, both have one passionate strain.

5.

In the new rays of the morning I walk to the Delphian Olives

That are strown on the hill warm with the love of the sun ;

Far down the valley they reach to the crystalline ripple of Pleistus,

Whose slender form they embrace in a soft forest of limbs.

Mild is the breath of the wind that sets all the branches in motion,

While the green wavelets of leaves roll down the sides of the mount.

Thither I turn my wandering steps in search of a maiden,
Whom this morn I beheld there as I entered the trees;
Whom before I had seen in my dreams as a vision of beauty,
Now the dim shadow is filled with the fresh fullness of life.
'Twas a form that always would draw the eye of a stranger,
Who to Parnassus had come seeking the face of a maid
That had haunted his fancy from youth in all his high moments,
To him had spoken perchance in his most rapturous mood.
Passing the fount of the Muses she sped from the heights of the village,
Seemed on the air to uprise, when her swift features I spied;
As on a picture above me I gazed at the beautiful image;
All of me changed to a hope which she most sweetly returned.
In the glint of her eyes I beheld waving torches of Eros
Who before Helen's look flew and enkindled the air.
One more glance she threw back at me just as she entered the Olives,
Then disappeared in the leaves as a bright dream in the clouds;
Now I must follow her footsteps till perchance I may find her,
For some priestess she was once when Apollo here ruled.

6.

As I stray round the hills through the Olives, soon I grow thirsty,
And this thirst is so sharp that it cuts down to my soul.
So I seek for a spring which will cool the throbs of my fever:
Here is a basin of stone filled with a crystalline draught.
Deftly the rock has been hewn to receive the rill of the mountain,
Which transparently rests in the embrace of the moss;

And a small groove has been scratched in the stone for the fall of
the water,

Thence down the side of the rock trickles the thirst-quenching stream.
Two little lips it doth fashion through which the runnel is gliding,
Just where the drops with a laugh over the brim give a leap,
And the stranger they gently invite to their pearls with a babble,
Promising kisses of joy to every one of his sips.
The fond brooklet has wound its way down from Parnassian summits,
Bringing along in its breast all the fresh breath of the Spring—
Whispering many a hymn from above on the brink in its passage:
'Tis impregnated still with the low note of the Muse.

So I lean down on the sedge and lay my mouth to the crystal,
Touch the sweet lips of the stream while of another I think.
But this stone—look how it is worn—worn off with the kisses
Which the passers have laid, ages on ages before.
Still the musical burn unceasing flows down from the mountain,
Still the lips in the rock are just as fresh as of yore.
Now every day for my walk I go by the rill in the Olives,
Held as I saunter along in the soft arms of a Muse:
Then when I drink, I fervently press those lips of the brooklet,
While I list to the hymn sung in its dance down the hill.
Draught of Parnassus—what could I do but join in the music?
So I in unison chant, tuning my voice to the stream.

7.

Many an hour I wander amid the vast orchard of Olives,
Gaze at the sparkle of leaves silvering over the hills;

Even the branches I love as they rollick and laugh in the sunbeams,
And their gay humor instil into each throb of the heart.
Under the trees I stop wherever a maiden is working,
Furtive glances I cast into the path of her eye,
That she may see them and with them perchance she may covertly
dally :

Then I pass on in my search for 'tis another I seek.
Long I hunt, deceived in my way by fantastic vain glimmers,
Often I stray from the road, often I think of return.
But at last I discover the form that imbreathes all my fancies ;
Deep in the grove she is hid where but few strangers approach.
Great is my joy ; she knows too my face from the morn when she
saw me

At the Castalian rill, bent o'er the stream for a drink.
At the exchange of a look I begin to gather the Olives
Scattered there under the trees—such was her laughing command ;
I, the servant of Eros, now find it the sweetest of labor
When I stoop to the ground, thence to collect the rich fruit ;
And my delight is to heap in the basket which is the Greek maiden's
All of the Olives I pick, passing the day in fond toil.
One subtle ray from her eye overflows me with beautiful visions ;
All the pay that I ask is but to look in her face.

8.

Many the paths are that lead from the village down to the Olives,
All directions they branch, winding amid the dense trees.
This is the first one—it goes direct to the ancient Metochi,

Where the monks have their home in a low cloister of gloom.
Gentle and good are these men, they have breathed all their days into
prayer,

All their thoughts rise above, shunning the Olives below
Where are the maids. From the hill I look at the roof of the cloister,
As it peacefully lies in the embrace of the leaves;
But this path I avoid as if mid its rocks dwelt a dragon
Snapping its jaws in my face. So I pass on to the next
Which is the second, and leads to the mill that presses the berries,
Where only men are at work, making the sweet-flavored oil.
Clear is the flow of the brook through the moss to the whirl of the mill-
wheel,

Friendly the look of the men seeing the stranger appear.
But not the flow of the brook with its babble along the fresh channel,
Not the old rustie mill, not the kind welcome of men
Can detain me from this path—the third one that leads to the Olives
Down in the valley below whither the maidens have gone.
There at times I can see, as it flits mid the trees a red apron,
Like a small tongue of flame leaping in folds from the ground;
Or perchance in a flutter of wind I behold the white garment,
As it seemeth to fly, winged with a pinion of red;
For it appears in the distance some bird of gracefulest plumage,
Crimson doth flow down its breast, snow doth reflect from its back.
Then, oh hear, that merry bright bird with song too is gifted,
Now in the Olives it sings notes that well out of the trees
Wave after wave, until they flow over me up to the hill-tops :
Undulations of hymns thrilled from a joyous young heart.

This is the path I am led in by Eros unerring, my master—
Down to the Olives I go, down to the Olives I go.

9.

Ah I confess, the Metochi I shun—the place of calm prayer,
Lapped in eternal repose mid the soft plies of the limbs,
Placid it rests as if now in Heaven. Old are the Olives
That around it have grown—sentinels faithful and fond,
Though their trunks, so twisted and scarred, have lost their fresh juices :
Not a maid can be found who will delay in their shade ;
Into the valley below they look, where sprout the young Olives,
With a mild disdain from the high perch of their site.
Holy the men are who dwell there, devoted to prayer incessant ;
Every moment they turn into the notes of a psalm
That like incense sweet rises up from their cells into Heaven :
Now their low chant I can hear from the small chapel of Saints,
Gently accusing me thence for my sins. Shall I enter the chapel ?
No—Eros now is my God, here I am tied to his wings ;
He has my soul and has flown long before me far down to the valley
Where the young Olives are, glorious sprouts of the Earth,
That are leaping in sunlight away from the gloomy Metochi—
Each little leaf on its twig sings a small poem of love.
What will boot all my prayers, without any soul ? Let me tell thee,
Body must follow the soul—down to the Olives I go.

CYCLET SECOND.

1.

In the hut I stopped where Philemon dwelt with his Baucis,
Aged they were and infirm, still they were living alone ;
Happy their days sped along like the mellowest hours of autumn,—
Hazy and dim to the sight, yet they of sunshine are full.
Love is here seen in its purity, cleansed from the dross of its passion,
Though the senses subside, still it remains in its glow ;
And it often doth seem in the soul to redouble its fervor,
Love of Psyche it is, bodiless spirit divine.
Long they together have lived till each resembles the other,
Time has them moulded to one till they no longer need speech ;
Each doth feel as the other, each doth think as the other,
Though the hearts may be twain, still there is felt but one pulse.
Always they go down together at sunrise into the Olives,
There they remain all the day, culling the fruit at their ease ;
Then at eve they return to their home of delight in the cabin,
Sweetly they lie down to rest, labor and years give repose ;
And in the trance of the night, in the spell that is wrought by soft
slumber,
Both are caressed by one song, both of them have the same dream.
Aged Olives they are and wrinkled—but notice them closely :
All the year round on the twigs blossoms are bursting to light.

So may I be when Time has crowned me with garlands of silver,
 Though he bend the old trunk, still it shall flower anew.
 Yet in my heart I would rather remain the young tree of the orchard
 Round which the maidens will dance with the fresh rose in their
 cheeks.

2.

Look at yon crow as he skims through the sunshine over the treetops
 'Tis a dark spot with wings playing mid beams of mild light.
 How he rejoices to sport all the day in ethereal splendor,
 Though each feather be dipped in the grave color of night!
 List to his note: Cluck, cluck—through the hills re-echoing deeply,
 Like the low hollow sound from two quick blows on a drum.
 Down the vale he flies, to a dot soon shrinking by distance:
 Still his voice can be heard from the black speck in the sky.
 Where is he going, I wonder? Cluck, cluck—see now he is sinking
 Down to the orchard below where his dark spouse he beholds
 Sitting expectant, alone, on the lusty young branch of an Olive;
 Thence too her cluck can be heard, clucking her ebony lord.
 That hoarse caw was the note, warm and tender, of love—of the crow's
 love:
 Now he vaults to the twigs that to soft dalliance bid.
 There is the silver-green sparkle of leaves, like the laughter of waters,
 There are the maids underneath tuning their throats for the hymn;
 Thither too I must go; Cluck, cluck—the crow I must follow,
 Clucking me down to the trees that so much music conceal.

3.

I had wound many hours through tortuous paths in the Olives,
Wasting the minutes with joys under the laugh of the leaves,
When not far from Arachoba, town of the beautiful women,
Pearly a fountain sprang out just at the edge of the road;
In the stream, as it gently flowed over pebbles, stood washers—
Fifty maidens or more who from the village had come.
Fair was the vision to fall in the eye of the way-worn stranger,
Healing the journey's fatigue more than a bath in the brook.
There I stopped on the bank and watched the harmonious movement
Flowing in glee out of forms tuned to a rhythm unheard.
In that crystalline water stood many a Phidian model—
Many a snow-white limb dimpled to folds by the waves;
And they seemed as if all were begotten of antique sculpture,
Which an artist of old once may have wrought on these hills,
Or were the daughters breathed into life by some ancient poet,
As in his rapture he sang over these valleys his strain.
Naked the hinge of the knee is, and naked the white is above it,
While the pale modest thigh hides in the kirtle for shame;
And the waters are whirled in a fit of supreme exaltation,
As the tremulous rill leaps round the ankles below;
Arms are bared to the shoulder while hands are in play with the
streamlet,
Round the loose garment a zone hardly restrains the coy dance
Of those fair twin sisters that ride on the swell of the bosom:
Thus in that gallery new wander I long and reflect.

From the brink I touch with mine eye each turn of their members,
Drink the Olympian draughts which are distilled from their forms.
This is my wish: That I were but one little drop of the brooklet,
That I might innocent play round the domains of their wealth.
And unsuspected might brush in my sportiveness o'er the white surface:

Now 'tis the beautiful world wholly forbidden to touch.
But the eye must select—it rests on a deep-bosomed maiden,
Wound are the strands of her hair into long tresses of gold,
Freely they fall down her neck and drop at her side to the water,
Bushy tips of the braid lave in the sport of the rill.
Then she stands in the crystal, intent on the glow of a garment,
Phoustanella 'tis called, ruffled to many a ply;
Even the folds sing a strain in the dexterous hand of the maiden,
Falling in graceful grooves as they grow white at her touch.
When from the bank I addressed her, she turned her face from the fountain,

Wrapped me in eyes of soft blue, gently caressing with looks
That I thought I was borne in a dream to the blue dome of Heaven:
“Give me that vestment,” I cried, “long have I sought such a garb;
Shining reward I shall give thee if I can now but possess it,
If the white folds shall be mine trained to the skill of thy hand.
For my body I long to enwrap in the waves of their music,
And my soul to attune unto their rhythmical flow,
Maid of Arachoba, thine is the handy-work which I shall treasure—
It I intend to transfer over the sea to my home.”

4.

I had intended to stop making Delphian hymns on the washers,

But when I see them at work, I cannot bridle my verse.

In the bare limb and its movement of grace there is soft attraction :

It is wicked, they say, still I delight in these shapes.

If I now were at home, I would shun them for moral example,

And my head I would turn quickly a different way

When I saw them ; but here propriety slightly may slacken,

No staid dame me beholds—let me indulge then mine eye.

Hundreds of washers there are, now standing by groups in the water,

Swashing the garments about in the clear flow of the rill.

What a clatter of tongues amid gay laughter and gossip !

All the love in the town now is discussed and much more.

Out of the hundreds one I select, altogether the fairest,

For without just the one, hundreds and hundreds were none.

Thither I loiter and stop on the brink of the brook where she washes,

Quickly she takes up a cup, goes to the head of the spring,

Where the gush of the crystalline water first leaps to the sunlight :

To me she offers a drink with a sweet welcome of words.

But an old crone beside her me asks the ridiculous question—

Art thou married or not—stranger, at home hast a wife?

To your question, said I, in this presence there is but one answer :

Not a man would confess though a new bride he have led

Not an hour ago from the church ; indeed I am certain,

Not a man would confess that he before ever loved.

Then I threw in the face of the maiden a small jet of water
To whose droplets my lips just had been fervently touched.
Thus I secretly sent her a kiss in the dash of the crystal—
How all the washers there laughed, hundreds were laughing at me.
Yet the maid was not angry but asked me : Hast a mantili ?
Give it into my hand—let me but wash it for thee.
So I reached her my handkerchief soiled with the sweat of the journey ;
Under her touch it was changed into a pearl of the rill,
And in the sun she outstretched it on a Parnassian laurel
Till my mantili was filled with high Apollo's mild glow.
— That is a glorious prize,—a handkerchief full of glad sunshine ;
Now I can wipe from my brow all my vexation and toil.—
Long I sat on a stone and looked at the joy of her motions,
While she was working for me with a sweet thought on her face.
But that maiden was washing something beside my mantili,
In her glances she laved every quick throb of my heart ;
And with the beams of her face she filled each nook of my bosom,
So that I carry them there with her fair picture enshrined.

5.

See yon eagle, how proudly he sails round the crags of the mountain !
Tawny and dark is his suit, stretched are his talons and beak,
And his eye fiercely glistens afar, throwing fiery glances
Down to the Olives beneath,—what can he mean, do you think ?
Prey—for into the silver-green orchard comes the shy pheasant,
That it may warily taste there a delicious repast.
So in innocence sweetly it feasts and plays after dinner

Hide-and-go-seek mid the rocks till it has wearied of sport.
There—see the swoop—down pounces the robber, and soon the poor
pheasant

Is borne up to the clouds and is consumed on the cliff. *repetition of!*
Maiden, beware, who art singing and playing now under the Olives,
The destroyer may come, unto thy hiding-place lured
By the song and the laugh which are rising up over the tree-tops :
Like the eagle he seeks banquets of innocent flesh.—
These words spake the old moralizer, moralizing within me ;
Me he intended to hit, thus then I answered his thrusts :
My little wings are not of the eagle, but of light-flying Eros ;
Beak he has none, I affirm, but a sweet mouth for a kiss ;
Nor has he talons, but the wee pretty hand of the baby ;
Nor upon flesh does he feed but upon fancy's bright flowers.
Look in mine eye, old Goody,—there's not the fierce flash of the falcon,
But its soft amorous globe melts in the glance of a maid.

CYCLET THIRD.

1.

“Have you, O stranger, in your country Olives?” the rude peasant
asks me,

As I look up at the limbs hung with large droppings of jet.
Ah, Good Friend, I reply, my country produces no Olives,
Carpetts of silver-green leaves sparkle not over our plains;
On the wayside you find not these trees with a dome built of berries,
And with the twigs in between holding rich layers of fruit.
There is not seen this light-hearted, delicate sway of the tree-tops,
As they move in the breeze sent from Parnassus above.
Nor is there under the branches the graceful dance of the maidens,
In sweet concord attuned to the bright movement of leaves;
Nor is heard there the hymn as it breathes from the hearts of the
youthful.

Winning the body to rhythm as in the chorus it moves.
There we sing not, because, I should say, we possess not the Olive,
Work is not seasoned with song, crowned not with poesy's bloom.
Nor the folds do we own, the immaculate folds of the dancers
Waving soft notes in accord with the glad leaves and the lay.
Yes, the truth must be told—my country produces no Olives,
And by some it is said that they will never there grow,

But I do not believe it. So I say to the peasant,
Who in deep marvel is lost how any land can exist
Wholly without the beautiful world of the silvery Olives,
And all the music and mirth which underneath them are born.
I must confess too, now that I think of the matter more closely,
I have to wonder myself how without Olives man is.

2.

There is one ugly sound I sometimes hear in the Olives ;
Nowhere pleasant to me, here it is doubly accursed :
'Tis the crack of a gun. The fire-red cap and shag mantle
Yonder I dimly can see gliding along through the trees ;
There the hunter stealthily lurks for the hare or the pheasant,
Or for the birds in the twigs at the great feast of the fruit.
Through the orchard afar the report on the silence is carried
Where a transparent repose lay in the beams of the sun ;
Every Olive is frightened to a continuous flutter,
For their enemy comes who is here shooting their peace—
Driving off from their leafy embrace the Parnassian songsters,
Driving the poesy off which the glad Olives enfolds.
The rude echo chimes not with the notes of the lyre or panspipe,
Nor with the voices of maids ever preluding the hymn.
But the whiff from that gun is the breath of some demon infernal
Which doth obscure in a cloud even Apollo's high lamp.
I too am frightened, carelessly stretched in the shade of an Olive,
Playing on a soft lute that is entuned to the clime ;
For I did not expect to hear such a sound in this orchard

Where in ages antique I was disporting my hours.
Now I am roused, but the joyous old realm departs from my vision,
At the rude shock of that crack vanishing into the years.
So at once I wake up in this world, yet somewhat astonished,
As a sulphurous smell greets my return to my time.
That was the puff which blew the old world into the new one,
Blew the whole race with a whiff thorough these thousands of years;
For on gunpowder's flash we moderns have come from old Hellas
To our realms by the West on either side of the sea.
I too am blown by that puff just while I lie here in this orchard,
Ages on ages I whiz, pressed in a sharp point of time;
Out of the temples of Gods I drop to this Byzantine chapel,
Blasted from Delphi the old, down into Kastri the new.

3.

In our world there are many fools, many kinds too of folly;
But the greatest fool 'mong the great types of his kind
Is the man who in stupid caprice is enraged at the Muses,
For a refusal to grant gifts which are theirs to bestow.
Yet of such folly to-day I was guilty and them I berated:
"Your stale fount may I shun, never again hear your name!
Both are always cut up in the hash of merciless rhymesters;
Men in two thousand years weary have grown of that dish.
Would that old Seismos might sink Castalia into his caverns,
So that never again one single drop of her rill
Would appear on the face of the earth, or flow down to the Olives:
For some dolt will be found always intent on her stream,

And of her drops he will ever be tippling, declaring them sovereign
In all cases of rage from a poetic flea-bite.
Then he'll continue to scribble in verse his delirious frenzies,
And ascribe them all to his deep draught at the spring;
Though his fancy steps not a Grace but capers a Dervish—
Morbid caprice of disease, not the mild movement of health.”
Thus many voices were chiding around me in horrible discord—
Each one trying to scold louder than all of the rest;
Into the world of the damned I thought for a time I had fallen,
Into the Hades new, made of the Critic's curse;
For I imagined that I was one of those critical spirits
Plunged into torture eterne at the mere name of the Muse,
And within me I heard only blasphemy, pain, and confusion,
Just because for a day all the sweet Sisters I banned.
Where they are not, ah, there is the dolorous realm of Pluto,
There are the sunless days passed in damnation and ruth.
Back I rush to the Delphian hill-side and to its fountain,
That I be free from the fiends which are now biting my soul:
Never, I swear it, again in my life shall I mock you, oh Muses,
But if you will permit, always your mocker I'll mock.

4.

Once on a visit to Delphi there came a Cahokian grocer,
Sugar and Coffee and Tea, Sugar and Coffee and Tea
Had been the single refrain of his life, his soul's sweetest music,
Which underneath evermore had a metallic sharp clink.
When he looked at the Delphian walls written over with letters,

In that work he beheld nought but a pile of old rocks ;
Then I triumphantly showed him a column's most beautiful fragment :

It was a broken stone good for a counter, perhaps ;
Also I stepped off the space and sought to build up the old temple
For his fancy anew, decked with its gables and frieze,
Quite as it lay many ages ago in the smile of the sungod—

“Stick to the facts, the hard facts,” was his response to my words.
Here stood the Hall of the Council far overlooking the valley,
There the Gymnasium lay, shining with forms of the youths,
Yonder above sat the people beholding the games of the Stadion—

“What is the good of all that ?” asked his inquisitive mind.
— Now in our walk let us pass up the rill to the cleft of Castalia,
Where the Muses once rose from the clear fountain of pearls,
Singing their strains till the mountain broke open this passage to hear
them :

“’Tis but a gully, I guess, worn in the cliff by this run,”
And he began to grow weary. I said : Let us go to the Olives
Where they reach to the vale down from the tops of the hills,
Forming an ocean of leaves full of points of a silvery sparkle :

“Silver, Sir, did you say ? That is the point I would see.”
But the merry young trees were but wood—a lot of green saplings—
And the berries I plucked fresh from the twigs he declared
Crude to his taste and rank to his smell and deformed to his eyesight :
Still I continued to talk of the Parnassian breath,
And of the manifold play of the leaves in the sunbeams,
And of the laughter of rills as through the orchard they leap,
And of the trill of the birds attuned to the hue of the flowers :

“All that we have at home, better, I think, than here.”

But at last the Greek maiden I pointed out there in the Olives :

Look in the depth of her eye dipped in the blue of yon sky,
Notice the Phidian forearm, turned to the gracefulest taper,

And the white bend of her brow swept o’er with wavelets of gold,
And the movement of form that is filling the air with its fragrance :

“Oh good lord ” he cried “she is some country wench ;
Look, she has no stockings, merely a pair of blue leggins

Which do not hide her nude feet slipped in the scraggy old shoes.”
Ended our Delphian walk, I conducted him home to my cabin,

Nor could the secret I keep which the dear Sisters me told,
But after bashful pretences began I to read him my poems :

“Friend, isn’t what thou hast read, rather a fanciful thing ? ”
Ah, no Nymphs he saw in the stream, no Muses he heard, but
Sugar and Coffee and Tea, Sugar and Coffee and Tea.

5.

Thereunto said the grocer who came from the fens of Cahokia :

Now I have seen all Greece—merely a fraud it is ;—
And the words of his voice were pitched in a screech of defiance,
Discontent had her seat just on the curl of his lip.

No one need talk to me now—he continued—I know all about it ;

All that is here I have seen, all too that ever was here.
When I go home, a book I have the intention of writing,
Just in order to show what the delusions have been,
And I purpose to prove to the world the plain proposition,
That the Greeks are cheats, having deceived mankind.

For they have said that Castalia here is the fount of the Muses ;
But of its waters I drank, yet not a poem I made ;
And I labored a day to climb to the peak of Parnassus,
Those false Sisters to see—only a rock I beheld.—
Ah, my friend, I replied, the market already is glutted,
Grocers have written ere this many a book on Greece,
And very learned Professors who had as great talent as Grocers,
Weighing Olympian Gods as they would sugar and tea.

6.

I was passing along on the cliff of steep Pappadeia,
To the brink I slipped and in the chasm I peered
Where many hundreds of feet the rocks leap straight to the bottom,
Till they reach a dark mouth gaping adown the gorge.
I am quaked with shudders that come from invisible monsters,
As my head I extend o'er the precipitous edge ;
Out the abysm beneath there darts through the eye a keen torture—
Out the passionate gloom couched far below in the rift :
There lies Zálisca. Scarcely I dare look down, I look forward
To the opposite bank where are huge columns of stone ;
Slowly I sink with mine eye on its layers down to the wolf-hole,
From the summit half way ; round it the eagles now fly,
For like fortresses there they have built inaccessible eyries :
Thence I began with a look lower, still lower, to sink,
When of a sudden I fell—fell down the dire steep in my fancy,
Whizzed along by the rocks, by the wild eagles I whizzed :
So I fell—I never could light, but still I kept falling

Down that infernal chasm—never could get on my feet.
It was a dream of a fall and yet it was horribly real ;
Thus my fancy me tricked, for it would give me no ground,
But it cheated my eyes with an empty appearance of landing,
Which merely gave a fresh start to a new furious descent.
Finally from the abyss Nymph Zálisca spoke in high anger :
Thy weak sight cannot reach thus the inside of my fane ;
Now I have punished thee, also have punished presumptuous fancy ;
If thou wouldst come where I am, seek not the horrors of night,
Shun the chaotic chasm forever devoid of the sunshine,
But above all, my abode seek not with fancy alone.
Go down slowly this mountain, then ascend the small valley,
Every step is firm ground, though somewhat long is the road.
There at once you will enter my door, and I shall receive thee,
There too Apollo will shine just at the mid-hour of day.—
So the Nymph reprovingly said as I turned from my gazing,
Still to be falling I seemed though I was walking away,
For my fancy still sought to keep up that play of delusion,
Like a machine in the brain which in its whirl could not stop.
Such was Zálisca's penalty for the abuse of the Muses,
Some other way I must seek to the enchantress' grot.

7.

It is night ; I go out from my hut for a view of the Olives,
That I may see how they look when great Apollo withdraws.
So I cast a long glance far over the sweep of the valley :

Trees are a dark dense coil winding around up the hills.
Only to sunshine do they belong—e'en the sister of Phoebus,
Mild-beaming Artemis there can not illumine the leaves;
Yet to-day when I passed underneath them how gaily they fluttered
As with the sun-rays they played soft intertwinings of love.
— In the night their glister doth change into dark lines of silence,
Moonlight can not entice from their glum sparkle a laugh.
But beyond them leaps up the huge mountain with three-pronged
trident,
Like a wraith of despair under the sheen of the moon;
And it seems to threaten the Olives that cower below it,
Sinking to darkness in fright, till they can flee to the Dawn.
At those shapes too I shudder, I haste to my cabin in terror—
Shadows I can not endure, nor the great giant up there.
For I now have become so at one with the sport of the Olives
That unhappy I am when I behold not their dance.
So I stretch out on the rug, and speedily grasp for my note-book,
Scribble by flickers of light that a faint taper sends out,
And I seek to illumine myself from the thoughts of the daytime;
Scarcely a flash can I get out of my memory's ward,
Suddenly then I drop over a dream—the Olives return now,
All the darkness has fled, Phoebus is shining on high.

8.

What is the reason the dream-god sends me so often one vision?

Three successive nights has he despatched the same dream.
Seldom his messages hither withstand the light of the morning:

Into Lethe they fly borne on the pinions of Sleep.
This one, however, always persists in remaining the day-time,
Gently it hovers above while I am taking my walk
Through the Olives, whose leaves in a thrill attune my bright vision,
Till I am swaying aloft on the vast swell of their notes.
Over the ocean I pass to my home, transplanting the Olive
Into a golden vale lying afar by the West,
Where flows down to the realms of the sun the wonderful River,
Banding together the world in the soft span of its stream,
Laughingly joining the summer to winter, the winter to summer,
While on its path each clime plants a fair garden of fruits.
On the banks of that river, just where it laves its dear city,
Over a bottom of marl rests the vast surface of trees;
And the barbarian Boreas seems not to mangle their leaflets,
Which with the sparkle of seas sweep to the North and the South.
Long I looked at the infinite stretch of the silver-green Olives,
As they lay in the sun, waving betimes in the wind.
Quite as much they appeared to rejoice in the name of Cahokia,
As in Delphi's fond name they are rejoicing to-day.
Fruit too they bore, the fairest and richest—richer than Delphian—
All around in the twigs densely the berries hung down.
Just from the soil rose the trees where once was the stench of foul water,
Where only reptiles bred, making their couch in the slime;
There the countless vermin that sting swarmed out of the quagmires,
Pestilence hovered above, ready to pounce on its prey;
And the only music there heard was the roar of the bull-frog
Mid the million-fold buzz sent from an insect world.

But the Olive now is enthroned which I brought from Parnassus,
Sloughs wear the smile of the Muse, banished are fever and noise,
And the leaves, like the curl of the waters, send forth a soft laughter,
As they join in the dance over the floor of the tops ;
The bland breezes, fair daughters of Æolus, gently embrace them,
Many sweet notes they lisp, as they unite in the sport.
But behold ! a bright circle of forms are weaving delightfulest measures,
While a glad music intertwines into the movements of grace,
Youths and maidens have joined their hands into links of the chorus,
Songs now arise from the vale throughout the length of the stream ;
Under the branches where once was heard but the discord of insects,
Hymns sprout forth with the fruit, labor is lightened with lays ;
All the great valley that was erewhile but a horrible jungle
With the glad Olives is filled, filled is with music and song.

Book Third.



Elpinike.

CYCLET FIRST.

1.

In these verses I wish to build a new temple to Fortune,
For the Goddess to-day showed me a favor divine ;
I shall raise her a temple and deck it with friezes of marble
Which will emblazon her deed worthy of glorious Gods.
For she led me direct to the house where dwells Elpinike,
Whom to behold I had wished all the long day of unrest.
Just at dusk I sauntered around through the lanes of the village,
With a sweet image in mind ta'en from a maid I had seen
Watering her horse at the gush of a fountain early this morning :
Lorn and unhappy I strayed in a delicious still pain,
When a door that stood right before me was oped and the image
Flew into body at once, with transformation divine.
Such is always the brightest Olympian present of Fortune,
When the dear shadow she turns into fresh life at her touch ;
So I beheld the pale lines of my faney to color transmuted,
Till my soul became eye—then too mine eye became soul.
That was Elpinike. She spake and besought me to enter,
Enter I did in her home, following footsteps so dear ;
Then from the joist where it hung on a nail she took down a pome-
granate ;
Which had been plucked by her hand in the glad season of fruits ;

And the heart within it was full of sweet juice and of redness,
Warm with a passionate glow, soft to the lips as a kiss;
Quickly she broke the hard rind, and quickly she peeled off its fragments,
When the heart was revealed, crimson, translucent all through.
With her fingers gently she parted in twain the pomegranate,
And she reached me the half—half of that bright scarlet heart;
Just in the middle most deftly she drew the line of partition,
So that each half seemed a whole while it remained still a half;
And no violence rude she employed to make the division,
But the parts of the fruit fell as by nature in twain;
For the one side had grown as if it belonged to me only,
Grown to be given away with the coy blush of a maid;
But the other red side that glowed in her hand like a beacon,
Wary she kept for herself—all she bestowed not at once.
What a joy for the soft-hearted fruit that no power convulsive
Tore asunder its cells filled with the blood of its life!
Then we sat down at the hearth by the fire and ate the pomegranate,
Picking out one by one seeds sweetly wrapped in the pulp,
And each seed was a word ensanguined in the heart's color,
And each word was a note hymned by the Muses' mild breath.

2.

Here I lie down on the sunlit slant of skyey Parnassus;
Thousands of hymns in a dance joyfully play through my brain;
Every line is dipped in the beams that are sent from Apollo,
In me all is transfused to a mild glow by their spell.
Silent the hymns seem to follow each other in endless procession,

Just their finger-tips touch as they glide by through the air,
And they are formed out of hundreds of images, jointed with music:

While they are flitting along in their sweet faces I peer.

Then from the pageant I snatch one, the shape that seems to me
brightest,

And I seek to impose fetters of verse on her form;

But she refuses to dance and to laugh as she did in her freedom,

Only in freedom she sings joined to her sisters in song.

So that train of translucent dreams in its center is broken

When their beautiful queen falls into measures and feet.

Ah, I feel that the best of my hymns are not those which are written,

Brightest of visions are quenched in the embrace of the word;

For they are born in a dance of the spirit and share in its movement,

Left in the musical throng where they are joined to their kin.

Still I shall catch them—the butterflies—e'en though many escape me,

Though their wings of gold sheen rudely are brushed by my hand;

From their pinions bright scales will remain on the tips of my fingers,

Though the fair phantom be flown, seen in its splendor no more.

So the hymns of the ages drop many deeds into Lethe,

Even the song of the hour leaves many minutes unsung;

And to-day there are thousands of hymns rising up with the moments,

And with the moments they sink down to oblivion's shades.

But in their motion I live—I exist but a cyelet of visions

Into the links of a chain woven by ticks of the clock.

But here comes the maidenly form for which I was grasping,

Not a dream mid dreams, but all alone and herself.

Oh, Elpinike whenever I see the soft turn of thy bosom
All my images vain dart at a glance into life.

3.

To the house I came where dwelleth the fair Elpinike ;
We sat down by the fire that in the chimney was lit,
On the hearth the twigs of the oak and the olive were sparkling,
There on the mats we sat down round the bright blaze of the fire.
— Large was the company—youthful and old—about her assembled,
Crowds of suitors and guests who find delight in her look.
Many a story was told of the time of the Great Revolution,
How Palicaris so bold slew then the barbarous Turk.
Next they sang, sang gaily of wine and of certain three maidens,
Who dispensed to the guests liquid of poesy's flame.
But to me Elpinike came with a jar full of sweetmeats,
Bade me to eat of the fruit—citrons from Chios they were,
Made by her hand of deep skill and then laid away for occasion,
Till the right one should come who could enjoy her sweet art.
Though she would not confess, I knew it was she who had made them,
For her delicate touch in the preserves I could taste,
And the fragrance that flows from her look I found in each morsel,
Now mildly flavored anew with the low whisper she breathed.
Long she stood there before me, pretending to hold me the server,
Longer I caused her to stand uttering words for delay
Sweeter than citrons—words that were sweetened by Eros
With the glance of the eye and the soft touch of the hand.
Then she reached me a beaker that brimmed with Castalia's pure water

Just from the spring by the rock, redolent with a new song
Fresh from the Muse; with her face in each drop I drank off the
crystal—

Draughts that reach to the soul, quenching its thirst by the hymn.
Now all the day I do nothing but eat of the junkets of fair Elpinike,
With them I drink of the brook, limpid Castalia's stream.

4.

Tell me, what is that voice which I hear, like the sound of a trumpet?

On the dusk air it rides down to the vale from the town.
Some stern duty to men it commands as it were from the Heavens,
Like the final loud blast bidding to judgment the world.—
That sound—'tis but the horn of the strict overseer of Olives

Summoning all of our folk out of the orchard below,
That he may measure the labor which has been done by our fingers :
So we render account daily for that which we do.—

Judgment it is, then ; well, let me be thy judge, Elpinike ;

What to-day hast thou done ? very severe I shall be.
Thou has gathered, I notice, many a basket of olives,
Here in the sack they all lie—each had a touch of thy hand.
Now as I think of their destiny happy, I become jealous,

What I can not obtain, they without asking possess ;
For they receive the glance of thine eye, and are grasped by thy fingers,
Then they repose for awhile in the caress of thy palm.
Would that I were an olive that I by thee might be gathered,
Softly be ta'en to thy hand for a sweet moment's embrace !
Nay, I would like to be crushed in the might of its fervidest pressure,

Till I would redden the palm with the warm drops from my breast.
 But this is not all of thy work, for I see the heart of a stranger
 As the chief prize of to-day—which thou didst pluck with thine eyes
 When this morning thou wert descending the hillside of Delphi :
 Here it lies mid the fruit, mid the dark berries it throbs
 In the strain of a hymn and beats time with a curious movement :
 It in these Delphian groves thou art detaining in song.
 But the just judge releases it not, and this is his judgment :
 Thou hast no blame, oh maid, thou canst not help being fair ;
 Nor can I censure this heart for being the captive of beauty :
 Let it sing on in its bonds till it shall sing itself free.

5.

“What is your name?”—she asked me as if she was eager to know it,
 For the laugh that was gay fell into soberer tones.
 “What is your name, pray, tell it me?”—thus she descends to petition :
 So I look in her eyes as I pronounce her my name.
 Then she seeks to repeat it, but the rude sounds make her stumble :
 Still I love her mistakes filled with her voice and her soul ;
 For the erratic light play of her words doth seem a lost rainbow,
 And each lisp of her tongue is the stray note of a hymn.
 “What is your name?” again she demands and again I repeat it :
 Many a lesson she learns syllabled after my speech.
 But the melodious blunders that fall from her lips I pity.
 Pity the Delphian note tied to a barbarous word.
 “Leave the harsh tones that only belong in the throat of a stranger,
 Whisper nought in mine ear but that soft music of thine ;”

So I say to her, yet she persists in trying to utter

With exactness my name wound in a wreath of sweet sound.

Eros, the flattering rogue, has shot a bad thought in my bosom :

That the Greek maid by some spell seeks to get hold of my name
And to make it her own. Still daily continued her effort

Till the rude Saxon she tamed to the soft kiss of her lips ;
Now she has learned my name and also pronounces it rightly,
Tuned to the accents of love which the fair Helen once spoke.

I confess hitherto my name was not to my liking,

But it I took as it came, from an invisible fate,
Not of my choice or control. But as uttered by Greek Elpinike,

Now I hear with delight what was distasteful before ; —
For of the rough blocks of sound she has built a fair temple,

● Rarest rhythmical notes rise from untunable speech,
And in my soul the fond image she wakes of a new revelation

Which I never had dreamed dwelt in the breath of a maid ;
Deep are the throbs that are borne on the air that is pulsed from her
bosom,

Borne on the wings of the word which she has caught from my lips.
But not only my name she winds in a garland of music,

Even myself she surrounds with the refrain of her voice,
So that she changes me into a subtle, harmonious measure,

And all the day I can hear choruses over the heights ;
Fain would I swoon forever away to a hymn of her breathing,
Till each word of my voice rayed the full grace of her form.

Thus she gently transforms me along with my name and my language, —
The whole world she transforms into her melody sweet ; —

All the trees of the forest, all the stars of the Heavens,
Even the soul of man hymns to the sway of her song

6.

Why in such rapturous mood do I walk through the Olives this
morning?

Something within me has wings and is attempting to fly;
For my feet have no weight and are set on the earth with an effort:
Elpinike I saw leading her horse down the hill
On whose slant are strown the high rocky nests of the Delphians,
By them spiti called—built on the rock out of rock;
Soon she stopped at the rill which flows from the source of the Muses.
Me she invited to drink, scooping her cup in the stream;
So I drank off the draught—in each drop there sparkled a verselet,
Then the beaker she took, drinking herself of its strain.
Sweet was the laugh of the brook o'er the pebbles, yet sweeter the
maiden;

Both in beauty seemed one, both in the soul sang a hymn.
Stooping near to the current she bathed face and hands in the water,
When like a nymph she arose out of the crystalline stream;
Over her cheek had spread the soft glow of the dawn rosy-fingered,
And her form was a dream sent from some Goddess of old.
Well I know that then she was touched by one of the Muses
Reaching out of their brook where they have always their home;
For by hand divine had her body become a sweet poem,
Which all her motions sang tuned to the softest refrain.

Still on my heart-strings now I can hear the strains of that music
As through the Olives I walk, dreaming of what I beheld.

7.

I am seeking some word to express what I feel in this sunlight,
As through the village I go, threading around in the lanes ;
Quite impossible 'tis to find any name for the humor,
Which refuses to slip into the trammels of speech ;
But Tranquility let it be called for the sake of these verses,
Since they demand some word, though not exactly it fit.
Tranquil I saunter along, the village also is tranquil,
Both of us have the same mood, both of us seem all alone ;
For the people have gone to the fields—to the Olives and vineyards :
Labor is lord of the place and he keeps busy his folk.
Hark ! through the passionless play of the sunbeams falls a low music,
Like the chord of a lyre by a weird finger-tip touched ;
Into this radiant repose so softly the tones are transfused,
That they seem to be one with the calm soul of the hour,
And to embosom within their lull some speechless emotion,
Which on the air of to-day rests in serenest delight.
But what causes that sound ? On tip-toe I slip to the dwelling
Out of which wells to the sun all that sweet fountain of notes ;
Open the window stands—sly curious glimpses I cast there :
Look ! it is but a loom, ancient in form and much worn.
But the hand of deft Elpinike is plying the shuttle :
There she sits on the stool—slightly she tips it aside,
That it moves with her body which steadily backwards and forwards

Sweeps with a manifold grace flowing down into the threads.
Out of her fingers the shuttle doth dart through the warp like a dolphin
Under the waves, while the woof thrills at the touch of her skill.
Also she rouses the loom into singing through all of its timbers,
And she subtly entwines in its refrain her own self,
For she builds a sweet poem out of the movements of body
Sent in soft waves through that room with the deep throbs of her soul.
Tell me, I beg thee, what art thou thinking about, Elpinike?
Much would I like to be told—aught of great joy it must be,
Thus to attune thy body, and even the loom and the shuttle.
That they unite in one strain with the glad sport of the rays.
She replied: For thee I am weaving a white phoustanella;
When thy costume I see, deeply ashamed I feel;
All those drab dapple garments of Franks, the tasteless barbarians,
Throw now quickly away that thou appear in new dress;
Truly this is no place for them here in the dells of Parnassus,
Even the child in the fields laughs at their graceless shape.
Yet not one but a dozen, nay I a hundred shall make thee:
Hence in secret I weave busily all the day long.
This is my hope supreme that thou move in folds like the chorus,
And each fold be a note sung to the tread of the youths.
More than a hundred fair vestments I'm making—with rhythm I fill
them,
Whose clear strain thou wilt hear as they encircle thy form.
So she arranged the web that ever a harmony subtle
Flowed from the quick-flying threads after the stroke of the loom:
Every thread had a thrill in accord with the whole of the music,

For it was touched by the thought that was inspiring the maid :
And that thought was of me when I would appear in her vesture—
Graceful white folds falling down, echoing softly her soul.

8.

When I go now on my walk through Delphi, every one knows me,
Gives a familiar salute with a fair word or a nod,
And they call me Didaskali—that is, the Master or Teacher,
With a strange guess at my life, hinted perchance in my face.
I accept the kind title and always return friendly greeting
To every nod of the head, to every smile of the eye.
Even the children no longer laugh at the foreigner's costume,
But they will follow my steps, gently ~~take me~~ by the hand,
Babbling their little delights in many a word of old Homer,
And these words too I greet like the dear faces of friends.
Also the mother will stop the full sweep of her loom to salute me,
As she sits weaving the threads for the phoustána's white folds.
With the Papás too, the priest, I oft take a stroll up the mountain—
Dark-haired, long-robed priest, with his hair parted like Christ's
Just in the middle, and falling loosely over his shoulders;
Kindly and good is the man, with not a stain on his soul.
Hours pass unnoticed as over the valley we look from the summit,
Talking of things far away on the wide world's other half
Where is my home by the River. But to Elpinike I play now
Teacher all the day long, teaching her mouth-wrenching words
Ta'en from my language—words that before never flowed from her
tongue-tip :

Willing the Master doth work, willing too seemeth the maid;—
For she keeps asking: What is the name of this thing in English?

So I utter the sounds which she attempts to repeat;
O'er the rough vocables then she skips like a brook over boulders—
Still her stammer I love, for it is fair as herself,

Even new beauty reveals, for she always resembles Castalia

When a rock may be cast into the flow of its stream:
For it will ripple and warble around the ugly intruder,

Making a melody new sung from the rill of the Muse;
Were there naught in the way of the stream, the beautiful water

Onward would flow in its course, lisping not even a note.
But with the babble and dash of its drops now a hymn it is singing
In the struggle it makes for its own happy repose.

Often merely a pebble thrown into pearly Castalia

Tunes her to sweetest of notes which she before never sang.
So in that streamlet I throw a large stone or perchance a small pebble,

Which the clear waters embrace with a pellucid soft throb.
Such is the way that I teach Elpinike the words of my language,
Which with her musical breath she doth convert to a song.

Sweet are all her mistakes for they drip with melodious honey,
Sweeter by far is her mouth twisted to utter my words,
And the rude sounds of my voice that through her soft lips are but
spoken

Changed are at once to a strain that hath the breath of the Muse.
But the day on which the Greek maiden has learned to talk English,
Shall a holiday be for the whole Delphian world,

And a great pomp of the God that moves with the notes of high music
I myself shall arrange to an Olympian hymn.

9.

Industry sends not the cloud of its smoke through the Delphian valley,
The black vomit of coal is not beheld from high flues.
Nor can be heard the unmusical hum that floats from great cities,
Crazing the ear and the soul with the mad sounds of unrest.
Not a wagon is here, not even two wheels with their axle;
And if they were now here, there is no road in the town.
No, not the hub of a cart can be found in the precincts of Delphi,
Merely a sculptured wheel once I beheld on a stone.
So from these ways is absent vehicular rumble and rattle,
Dust defiles not the robes, silver and green, of the trees,
Nor does soot in the Heavens besmire the gold beams of Apollo,
Nor on Earth does it soil here the white folds of the youths
And of the maids as they joyously move to the step of the chorus:
Heaven and Earth are two notes blent into one sweet accord.
Marble would glisten to-day, as if it were in the old temple
Which on this hillside was perched with the bright column and frieze;
Many the far-darting gleams it would send down over the valley,
On every sunbeam a thrill thence it would pulse to the eye.
Nor has Castalia, pure virgin, been soiled by the ooze of the sewer,
But the sweet Nymph has a face sparkling, translucent with smiles.
Steam, the rude blower and puffer, and always in a great hurry
Has not disturbed the repose that still envelopes these hills.
What then is here, dost thou ask? Let me tell thee—'tis the glad Olives,

'Tis the poetical life, visions outside of the world,
'Tis the fair setting of Nature for each appearance of beauty,
'Tis the hymn that is sung both by us mortals and Gods.
Also still here are the folds and the form of divine Elpinike,
Fairest of maids on the Earth, dream of what Helen once was.
Smut from Industry's chimney, dust from Commerce's highway,
Have not blotched her pure robes, have not begrimed her white limbs.

CYCLÉT SECOND.

1.

Ask me not what I am going to do on the morrow—

Whether I Delphi shall leave, or shall remain yet awhile—

I do not know, Good Host, for I can not form any purpose : —

All my intentions are bound with the tight cords of a God ;

'Tis a small merry God whose life is merely to dally,

Yet his wee little arms strong are as Hercules' limbs.

To the endless caprice of his wings on my back I am fastened,

Ever together we sport round the new flowers of Spring,

And we scent in each blossom the freshest Parnassian fragrance,

Even the honey we sip, dripping it into a hymn.

Only so much of myself I can tell thee : down to the Olives

Once at least I shall go, there fondly wasting the hours.

For there always the maidens are near, and still nearer is dreamland—

Both even melt into one under the dance of the leaves.

There I lie on the grass by the runnel of pearly Castalia

Mid the trees, while I list to the small voices of Nymphs,

If perchance some low little whisper of theirs may be uttered,

That will redouble my joy, turning the minutes to hymns.

Long in waiting I lie without any note of their presence,

Till Elpinike appear on the green brink of the stream.

Then at once the coy Nymphs are starting to rise from the water,
Graceful and joyous they rise out of the ripple serene;
Softly the lilies are peering above the crystalline surface,
And their bosoms unfold whitest Parnassian snows;
All undraped are their forms of delight—sweet Nature's own daughters,
Born now into the world, loosed from the trammels of shame
Which jealous custom has thrown over beauty. But in Castalia
They are free from their bonds, free from the prison of clothes.
This is the reason why so intently I peer in that fountain;
— For some bathers divine always I see in its depths.
Out of the long dripping tresses of jet they are pressing the water;
Mark the hands softly white laid on the locks that are dark.
Under the glassy transparency purling over the pebbles
I behold the fair limbs tremulous in the clear wave:
Quite enough of Olympian beauty to wake soft suggestion,
As the outlines of white swim in the wavering stream.
Slowly they come up the shelve of the bank from the watery mirror,
Shining their bodies arise, marbles that move into life,
And at each step they bring to the vision fresh raptures, revealing
Some new perfection of form hitherto lost in the wave.
There at last all the Nymphs of the stream are standing before me,
As the Goddesses stood once before Paris the judge
Judging the boon of the world. The hours have flown into seconds,
Time has a thousand new wings freshly put on for his flight,
While I am lying and looking, entranced in Olympian visions:
Life is with them too short, yet is without them too long.
Smite me dead at this view, I would pray, that never another

May hereafter intrude into the scope of mine eye ;
Or this lot would I choose, Oh mysterious fates of existence,
Let me eternally live with this fair dream in my soul ;
For the dull life of man may be worth immortality's dower,
If it some image embalm that is immortal in joy.
Such are the beautiful shapes that start up from the brook of Castalia,
When on the brink thou dost stand, Oh Elpinike my fair,
At my side here under the Olives, the famous green sproutlings,
Which at the view of the Nymphs quiver with love in each leaf.

2.

Notice, Oh Dearest, this marble that lies in the vineyard,
Stained with the rust of the years, gnawed by the frost and the rain ;
Yet in old Delphian days it was perfect and white as the linen
Which then shrouded the form laid in its snowy embrace.
This was the lid of the tomb and on it is sculptured the princess—
She who once must have lived, hence she who once must have loved.
Still in the stone you can see the white folds wave down her fair body,
As on the cushion she lies propping her head with her arm ;
And the neat zone round her waist hath the span of the hand of a lover
Just beneath the shy breasts swoln with the first thought of youth.
From the hem of the loose-flowing vestment is peering the ankle,
While the lines of the limbs upwards are traced in the folds.
But the soft curves of her body are only alive in this fragment,
The fond clasp of those arms long since has fallen to dust,
And the hue of the eyes, once brimming with flashes of Eros,
Now forever is lost in an impassive blank stare ;

What thinkest thou has become of the millions on millions of treasure

That poured out of those lips at the low whisper of love?

Lost, all lost forever and ever. Come then, and quickly;

For each moment is winged bearing away in its flight

Opportunity : life is the use of opportune moments ;

Swift, now give me thine eyes raying with sweetest desire ;

And, may I ask it ?—with violence throw thy embraces around me

That I may see in thy glance all the bright rainbows of life,

And be chained to thy breast in the tight living links of thy fetters,

— Ere thy body be chilled into this stone on a tomb.

Earth is the happy abode of love with its fount of caresses :

Hades will cut them all off—quick, let each minute be gain.

3.

'Tis not every day Elpinikè I find in gay humor :

For sometimes she looks back to her bright days in the past ;

Retrospection for all is a sigh-heaving work of the spirit,

But for the Grecian maid doubly redoubles the pang.

“See yon dwelling, inwards have fallen the roof and the rafters,

Only the walls now stand—they too are rifted with creaks.

Many a tendril and vine have begun to creep over the ruins,

In their luxuriant folds soon will be hidden each stone.

Once we there lived, and yet can be seen the form of my lattice

Which the foliage trains still to its winding embrace.

Everywhere overgrown is my garden with weeds and with brambles,

Though pretty flowers peep out from the rank growth of the soil.

But behold here also the fragments of some ancient temple

That once stood on this spot, far overlooking the vale ;
Never again will a mortal be able to put them together
Into the whole of that fane as it once rose on this height.
Over the hill-side are scattered the beautiful bits of white marble,
Often I gather them still, piece them in fancy to one.
They were broken by Seismos, the dark-minded shaker of Delphi,
Once he the temple destroyed, he is our enemy yet ;
Even our modest abode he smote and upheaved in his anger ;
Here deserted it lies, still by the creepers beloved.
Often my father has told me with sighs, this house was my dower,
All the wealth that I had now is reduced to these stones,
And my inheritance, splendid of old, is invested in ruins—
Seismos my dower has seized, dowerless now I am left.
Once I possessed for myself this beautiful dwelling and garden,
Many suitors I had from all Parnassian towns,
When to my Delphian home there came the hour of convulsion ;
Now all alone I must mourn left a poor dowerless maid.”—
Cease thy plaint, Elpinike, sorrow becomes not thy presence ;—
Think a dower thou hast richer than any on earth.
Has not the world ever wooed thee, and sought to inherit thy beauty ?
Seismos may rave in his wrath, thou in thy ruins hast all.
Part of thy wealth may be wasted, still thou art queen of Parnassus,
Holding melodious sway over the songs of its youths ;
Look now at me who have crossed the broad ocean simply to see thee,
Simply to carry thy face back to my home in my soul.

4.

Here in this alley there lies the fragment of some ancient column,
Half imbedded in soil, tipped to one side in its fall ;
See the shape of the flower there sculptured in happiest outline,
Just in the bloom of its growth with all the leaves on the stalk.
Even in marble it has a fresh look as if blowing in springtide,
Though rude handfuls of Time long have been flung on its form ;
Gently it elings to the stone and lovingly winds round the pillar,
Yet it turns to my glance with a soft smile in its eye.
So art thou, divine Elpinike, the flower of Delphi,
Ancient thou art, I should say, just in the bud of thy youth ;
For if the Delphian priestess now were alive in her beauty,
She thy form would assume, robed in the waves of white folds.
But though so young, thou art hid, methinks in the ages of Delphi,
Beautiful flower in stone sprung from a fancy of old.
Note but this leaf, how graceful it lies in the curve of the marble ;
Then another succeeds—half of it only you see ;
Then still further below is beheld the mere tip of a leaflet,
All the others are hid in the dark tomb of the ground.
But the day will come when the leaves shall leap from their cover,
And the day will come when Elpinike shall bloom.
Now I am going to dig from the rubbish this column of flowers,
Piece together its parts, cleanse from the dirt every line,
Set up the column in light that again it may sun itself proudly :
Then what a fragrance will rise out of that flowery shaft !

5.

'Tis not the first, not the second nor third time that I have listened
To the tale of thy dreams—was Elpinike's reply.

This is the reason I love thee: because thou art a good dreamer.

And because thou canst dream better awake than asleep.

Now it is my turn—list then while I shall tell thee a vision

Which ingrains all my life both in the day-time and night.

Once mid these hills and valleys I passed a sunny existence,

Though between now and then ages have thrust all their wrath.

Full of action heroic a youth I sprang down the mountain,

In each motion of limb felt I the might of a God;

And as I wrought, I sang in harmonious measures of beauty,

To my action I sang fitting the voice to the hand. —

Nay, each feat, each movement dropped of itself into music,

Every deed was a song, every song was a deed.

Suddenly then on the side of these hills I was changed to a flower,

Flower that merely was fair while here inactive it bloomed.

Thousands and thousands of years I continued to grow on the hill-side,

All men my beauty admired, sought me often to pluck;

Some dug me out by the roots and bore me to far-distant countries, —

For a while I would thrive nursed in the warmth of their love.

Still of the pang I never was rid that I dwelt among strangers,

So I wilted at heart—then I would die from the soil.

But when elsewhere I drooped I continued to bloom on Parnassus,

And my fragrance I threw into each nook of the world.

But they treated me as they would treat some small pretty flower,

They would sport with my buds, breathe in my heart's rich perfume,
 And would admire the shape of my leaves bedewed of the Graces,
 Oft in their rude native clay sought they to copy my form.
 Oh how tired I grew of being forever a flower,
 Longed for sinews and blood, longed for the man-making deed !
 Once I dreamed that I rose like a youth—the ancient Achilles—
 For the armor I sprang, though in the dress of a maid ;
 Over the tops of the hills there came to me blasts of a trumpet
 Calling me back to the life which I once led in the world ;
 Up from the ground leaped the flower—anew I was storming old Ilium,
 Nobly I sang of my act, nobly I acted my song.
 But again I was slain by divine irreversible arrow—
 Then with my death I awoke, just as to Hades I fell.
 Still in my heart, though awake I may be, I have a deep longing,
 For—I can not tell what—still a deep longing I have.

6.

As I arose from my cot, I had a disgust this morning,
 Which had crept in my soul during the visions of night,
 And I said to myself: "To-day I'll not make any poems,
 For I am tired to death, dreaming so much in the sun.
 Of the ceaseless procession of fancies fully I'm sated,
 Proper it is some rest now I should have from the throng ;
 Grant me a day without the Muses, without the Greek maiden,
 Oh for one day of repose, free from the Olives and leaves !
 Let Castalia flow down to the sea without giving me trouble,
 And the Nymphs in the rill bathe out of reach of mine eye."—

So my course I direct to the rocks, the bare rocks on the mountain,
And as bare as a rock is the white page of my brain.
Also to Krissa I go, prosaic in dress and in customs,
Freed from the memories old which on the Delphian stones
Are engraved everywhere that they speak with the breath of Apollo:
Now mine ears I have stopped to the sweet notes of their voice.
Then I scourge from my presence each rapturous child of my fancy,
Till in terror it flies, seeking a nook in the clouds;
Almost with anger out of the air I smite every image
That for a moment may dance, trying to flatter mine eye.
But above all other shapes Elpinike I shunned in the Olives,
During one day I resolved not to behold the Greek maid.
Strictly my promise I kept until the first shade of the nightfall,
When I went by the spring, thinking of nought in my mood.
There she was standing right in the line of my eye—the enchantress—
Purpose melted away like a thin frost in the sun.
Home I am driven amid the incessant wild dance of the visions
That had snapped the weak thread which them had tied in their cells;
All the orgies of fancy broke loose in a fierce Bacchic frenzy,
To revenge the restraint put on one Delphian day.
Bring me a light, Oh hostess—where is my paper and pencil?
For these riotous shapes I must enchain in my verse;
Ere they will cease I must cast them in musical far-shining fetters:
If the right word I can catch, then I am freed from their throng.

7.

Mockery was to-night the new strain of bright Elpinike,
Grecian mockery too, drenching me through with its spray ;
And there was salt in that dash of her spirits from oceans of humor,
Nor could refuge I find as it would splash in my face.
First she mocked my gait with the strut and stride of an actor,
Then my titter she mocked with a low titter herself ;
Turns of my head, the roll of mine eye, my hands' thoughtless gesture'
Also my Humph and my Ha—even my silence she mocked.
So I was forced to look at myself in the mirror of Comus ;
And my accent I heard, say what I might to that Greek :
All the twists and turns of my tongue in speaking her language
Were thrown back on my ear trebly contorted and gnarled,
While a thousandfold mimicry wantonly played in her features,
To the words of her speech adding much salt of their own.
Truly to-day tart Comedy's Muse held sway in Castalia,
And from the fount to the maid handed a mask as she drank,
Early this morning, when from the village she passed to the Olives :
For each morning she drinks out of a wonderful cup
Wrought both outside and inside with many a figure of fancy ;
E'en on the rim the clear draught touches her lips through a dance
Wreathed of the bodies of maidens and youths to a circle of garlands
Whom the Graces bedew with all their fragrance of form.
Also the cup is reached by a Muse to her out of the fountain
Bubbling forth from the depths, dark and unknown, of the Earth.

Every day from some one of the Sisters she hath inspiration,
As from the beaker of pearls she may have drunk in the morn.
So the Nine take turns in the gift that her days may all differ :
Thus her laborious hours lined are with poesy's dreams,
And in each jet of her humor there plays a poetical rainbow
Leaping in bright-colored mirth out of my reach to the skies.
There—just now she was mocking me whilst I spoke of the Muses :—
Then the Olives she mocks—mocks e'en my love for herself.
But at last I caught her and kissed her : “ Mock that, merry mocker,
Just as oft as you wish ” ; only my language she mocked.

8.

Certainly all the hours of to-day I was laughed at by Eros,
For the triumphant young scamp led me astray from my plan.
As I sauntered along, projecting a new mighty poem
That would reveal all the Gods, mysteries deep would unfold,
That would the universe set to new music and make me immortal,—
Into the Olives I strolled, secretly fanned by his wings.
Suddenly there, as I wandered around, I met Elpinike :
Eros, the rogue, was my guide, always he plays me such pranks.
Not a step further I went, I could not move a step further ;
There I had to remain till of his spell I was free.
So the flexible rod I grasped, and then began beating
On the limbs of the trees till the ripe berries would fall ;
Long I labored and hard, for under the branches the maiden
Was with her mother at work, picking the fruit from the ground.
When every twig of the tree I had bared of its delicate burden,

And a dark layer of fruit wound through the blades of the grain,
Then for hours I stooped and helped to gather the berries :

Simply a look was my pay, furtively wreathed in a smile.
As her hood she adjusted over her chin and her forehead,

‘Always trying to hide what she was careful to show.
Meanwhile I was attentively talking to the dear mother

Of small things far away; mothers have also their charm.
Thus I was bound in a chain that was linked with successions of glances

There the trees underneath, nor could I stir from the spot.
Freedom’s wildest delight I had in the trammels of prison,

— All the while too a hymn swelled in my bosom suppressed.
While I was thrall’d beneath the green leaves in the laugh of his fetters,

Eros fluttered in sport over the tops of the trees ;
Often I saw just the tip of his wing or the point of his arrow.

As he would flit through the twigs, leaving a radiant film
That would hang in the air for a moment then pass into nothing ;

When I looked for his form, always he vanished away.
Often too over my head I heard the low chuck of his titter,

As he would giggle in glee, mocking my limbs in the gyves.
So the young scapegrace till nightfall o’er me continued to triumph,

Badgered me there with his jibes as I lay helpless in bonds ;
And instead of the mighty magnificent poem I planned there,

Now I have written these small silliest verses of love
Dictated madly by him, the tyrant of soul and of body :

Only disgust I can feel now as the poem I read.

9.

A new maiden I met in my stroll through the Olives—Stephane;
She had one eye of blue that in its depth showed a sky,
While the other was black and was lit with fiery glances;
Eros had into them both shot all the might of his dart.
When I went up and talked to the maid, I was greatly embarrassed
Which of the eyes to address, each one demanding my look;
Each was a jealous tyrant, shamefully lording the other.
Each had a spy of her acts following just at her side.
Each of those spheres I loved all alone, but both not together,
Separate each I would seek, both I would flee for my life.
'Tis not easy to manage two lovers though kept far asunder,
But if they happen to meet both may be lost by a look.
What a torture I felt in answering two diverse glances!
For whichever I chose, that was the end of my joy.
Only when into the one burning look two eyes may be melted,
Is the fervor redoubled till it flames down to the soul.
But alas! now the glances are twain—to each other are hostile—
With two looks from one face, tell me, I pray, what to do.
This misfortune, however, was not the end of my troubles:
Elpinike me saw as I conversed with that maid.
Jealousy then for the first time she showed in a frown on her visage,
Saying: which eye dost thou love—is it the blue or the black?
In one body Stephane encloses two souls, each pulling asunder:
Ha, two sweethearts in one fine it must be to possess.
Wive her, I pray thee, and then thou wilt have two wives in thy
household,

Though her sweet person be one in the embrace of thine arms;
And whenever she looks in thine eyes that are brimming with rapture,
I defy thee to tell which of thy wives it may be.
So thy kisses must always be halved for concord domestic,
Lest the one of her looks eat up the other in wrath.
In that quarrel of glances thy life will be merry with asking :
Please now, what says the blue? what says the black, if it please?
Go thy ways—thou art double thyself as the eyes of Stephane,
Thy false heart has two beats, thou hast two masks in one face.

10.

Thrice already have I resolved on departure from Delphi,
Thrice has my purpose been smit by the strong hand of a God,
So that it prostrate has lain in my bosom and helplessly quivered,
Faint were its struggles to rise after that blow from above.
But again there comes to my soul the pang of decision,
For the hours of my stay haste to their limit in time ;
Shall I remain still longer, or shall I set out to-morrow ?
Shall I quit the bright fount with all its pearls unstrung ?
Shall I suddenly leave the fair image and stop making poems ?
Shall the Delphian days live or be changed to a dream ?
Now in my life they are real, deep-linked in the chain of my moments,
But they must lapse when I leave into pale Memory's shades.
Yet it is time I should start. By my thoughts torn asunder,
I go down to the vale, under the Olives I walk ;
Every leaflet is stirring its wings to fly from the tree tops,

Pinions to me it doth give that I take part in its flight ;
And the green millions with silver-starred sparkle now dance in the
sunlight,

Till their lustre and sport seem to be part of myself.
Under the fairest young tree now I saunter—I find Elpinike—
Purpose again is laid out by a soft dart of the God.

CYCLET THIRD.

1.

Cast thy look upwards—yonder glistens the snow of Parnassus,
Downward now let it fall—there is the glow of the rays ;
Winter thou seest above, while below in the vale is the summer,
Both an influence fair lend to the eye and the soul.
But at my feet here cometh the spring leaping out of the mountain,
With young flowers and buds in his soft finger-tips held.
Seasons now fly not in terror away from the face of each other,
But together they dwell, for they are brothered in joy,
And to-day they are dressed in light folds of azure translucence—
All can be seen through the haze, yet too the haze can be seen.
The bright world is beheld in a dream behind its blue curtain,
Still that curtain so fine wondrously too is beheld ;
While it is subtly revealing fair Nature, itself is revealed,
While it others adorns, 'tis thus adorned itself.
So art thou, Elpinike, here in the midst of the Olives,
Through thee I see all the world, clearly reflected and new ;
The old Earth has become a new planet in thee discovered.
I a new person am born, born while I gaze in thine eyes ;
All is seen with new vision and is enrobed in new colors,
Which do not hide or distort, but which reveal what is true ;

And at the same time, thee Elpinike, sweet mirror of Nature,
Thee I behold in thyself while in thee all I behold.

2.

Thou hast read me, Oh friend, thy new poem,—replied Elpinike,
And translated it too, still I can not understand;
Surely thou wert possessed when writing to-day by a spirit
From thy home far away; here it belongs not, I know.
For in Hellas we dip each word in the beams of Apollo,
That they illumine what they touch while too they shine of themselves.
Look at yon Olive that stands on the edge of steep Pappadeia
Where the cleft descends hundreds of feet straight down;
Over the dismal abyss more than half of the tree is inclining,
While its stubborn roots grapple for help in the rocks.
But the fruit, the fair crop of the branches, drops off in the chasm,
Where it is dark as night, nought can be seen from the top;
And for man there is no descent, whatever his courage,
Into that depth below—steep as a line is the wall;
Nor durst any one venture to climb on the limbs for the berries,
Lest the treacherous tree loosen its grasp from the brink.
Thus all its Olives are wasted because they fall into darkness,
Yet they are good as the rest, excellent dainties would make,
And they would serve well to nourish the voice of the singer
Who doth sing at the feast hymns full of Delphic delight.
But not a man will descend to that gloom—much less will a woman:
Thus are thy words sometimes, just like those Olives, my friend.
For they fall down deep into darkness, said Elpinike,

Whence I can not for my life gather their forms or their sense.
 So, let me frankly confess to thy face, were also thy verses
 Which ^{thou} were ~~reeling~~ ^{reeling} just now—Olives that fell in the gorge.
 They may be good, but so deep they lie that I can not get at them;
 How I quake to go down into that rayless abyss
 Where they are lodged now! Think, but a woman I am, a Greek maiden
 Gloomy depths I avoid—give me my place in the sun
 Making the world as cheerful and bright as a temple of marble:
 Oh the dark chasms of soul, worse them I hate than this gorge!

3.

Look, Oh dearest, away from this summit down into yon valley!
 There is the mantle of haze spread o'er the Olives and plain;
 From the heights far above, it reaches below to the waters
 Of the Corinthian Sea lying in azure repose.
 Near us light blue is the mountain; deep blue it grows in the distance,
 Whilst through the colors so faint, Helius scatters his gold.
 Why, thou askest, was made this haze, and what is it good for?—
 Beautiful merely to be and to delight with its hue.
 For it attuneth the soul with its quiet harmonious grandeur;
 All of it thou must behold, else thou beholdest but naught.
 Near by it will not be seen—only in the aerial distance
 Canst thou observe its frail form, ever refusing the touch.
 Here thou canst not say that it is, nor point to it yonder
 In a particular spot; still it exists and is fair.
 So do I feel when I look on thy beauty, Oh Elpinike,
 I can not say that it lies in thy sweet lips or thy cheek

Or thy forehead ; I know thou art fair, I question no further,
But delight my fond eye viewing the whole of thy form.
I desire not to seek for the deep-hidden reason of beauty,
Lest it should vanish like haze when it is sought to be grasped ;
In thy presence I lose every thought—am transformed to pure vision ;
Simply I know thou art fair—what of thee more would I know ?

4.

Who made the haze and what he made it for, are stupid questions,
Any answer thereto I in my soul do disdain ;
Look ! it is one fair color upon this picture of Nature
That is stretched till the sea for the delight of us all.
Not any origin wish I to seek of the beautiful object,
Not any use shall I ask when it before me doth lie ;
Simply I try to surrender myself to its waters of beauty,
There unconsciously float while I am rocked to repose.
Clouds are white, and valleys are green, and mountains are mottled,
Yet they all are but one and they excite but one joy.
Silver-green are the leaves of the Olive, golden the sunbeams,
But the mild haze draws a veil wove of transparent light blue.
In the distance shineth the sea ; beheld through this curtain,
In a calm rapture it lies passing beyond out of sight,
And it speaks to the soul of some tranquil home in the future
That doth rise far away out of the ken of the Now,
Dimly receding in haze, and yet from this summit revealed,
Hinting of worlds that have been, hinting of worlds still to be,
Whither the heart doth turn oftentimes with deep aspiration : —

Hold! the Olives appear, thither at once let us go;
To this glorious world they belong—I seek not another.

Here is the strain of the Muse, here is the rapture of love,
But above all, thy form is beheld on our Earth, Elpinike.

Round thee now Olives have joined in the gay whirl of the dance;
See how the tops of the trees in the sunshine with light palpitation

Flutter afar down the mount full of the joy of the hour!
Under the sport of the leaflets are winding the youths of the chorus,
There is the home of my heart, thither I pass through the haze.

5.

Often it seemeth to me that Apollo doth play with his Delphi,
Hiding his joyous young face merely for sport in the clouds
For a few moments, till he may see what the world is without him.

Then he throws off the mask, making us laugh in his beams.
Thrice to-day I attempted to stir from the house when I saw him
Out on the mountains above, dancing in glee o'er the tops.
Thither I also wanted to go and join in that chorus.

All of sunbeams composed, over Parnassian heights.
But at once he would dive in a cloud and there remain hidden.
Even some droplets of rain would he dash down in my face.
I, beholding him frown from his darkened throne in the heavens,
Quickly returned to the house, deeming him moody the while.
But as soon as I passed in the door and was looking behind me,
Shining he was again—laughing aloud at my fright.
So three times to-day he has acted,—so, Elpinike,
Thou hast acted to-day, Delphian child of the God.

For thou hast told the story, so pitiful, of thy misfortunes,
That I was ready to weep, when just behind in thine eyes
I beheld the faint twinkle of smiles pursuing each other,
So that I answered their laugh right in thy mirror of tears.
'Tis thy delight to make me afraid with thy frown for a moment,
But the cloud in thy face breaks into dimples of joy.

6.

Wretched hovels now hold the high site of Apollo's great temple.
Yet some walls can be seen which of the past try to tell;
But no more we behold the smooth white embrace of the columns
Round the cell of the God which his clear shape indwelt;
And the front of the temple is gone, the far-shining forehead,
Where in sculpture were read deeds of the God in his might;
Also the frieze, the soft fillet around the head of the structure,
Telling a story of old in a low hymn writ of stone,
Has been lost from Delphi along with thousands of marbles,
Singing each one some strain to the Great Man or the God.—
No, these words are not true, for I saw erewhile the old temple:
I can the secret impart how thou canst see it as well.
I was down in the valley where sports the orchard of Olives,
Elpinike was there—stood at my side as I looked,
And she lent me her beautiful eyes, her soul too she lent me,
Bade me upward to glance where was the Delphian town;
Through a long verdant view enchased by the web of the branches
The old temple I saw rise once again in its pride;
Thither the leaves made a framework of gracefulest lines for its splendor,

Through them the marble upsprang gleaming anew from the hill,
 Just as fair Elpinike began in her smiles to enwrap me,
 And as I felt her mild breath freighted with words from her soul.
 I looked up through the twigs and the leaves and beheld ancient Delphi
 Filled with beauty and light, moving to measures of hymns.

7.

Out on the slant of the hill-side lies the old Delphian graveyard :
 By it oft I must pass when to the Olives I go ;
 Ancient coffins of stone through the fields in disorder are scattered :
 Some are just broken in twain smote by a single rude blow.
 Others have had many blows from the ages and crumbled to fragments,
 Still a few have remained whole in the tempest of time.
 But they all are now empty where once were laid the dear bodies,
 Laid with many a tear in the thick casket of rock,
 Strong enough to preserve what it held in its chamber forever :
 But not e'en ashes are here speaking of life and its sleep.
 How I would like to behold some one of the shapes in its splendor
 Rise now out of this stone, in a new Delphian birth,
 And with the flow of the folds sweep there through the Halls of Apollo,
 Mid the high columns that shine as in the days of the God !
 But the fair body has perished in spite of the strength of the fortress :
 So Elpinike thou too must by dark Death be entombed.
 But let us fly from the thought—let us hurry away to the Olives :
 There cheerless Acheron's stream dries in the sheen of the leaves,
 There are the happy domains of our Eros illumed by the sunbeams,
 There let us know what is love, yielding to honeyed caress

While the Hours still lend us their wings and bedew the sweet senses :

For I feel sorely afraid, love may not be after death ;

Eros, the gladsome, flees from the gloomy regard of grim Pluto,

But the Olives he seeks sporting his wings in the trees ;

Nor will Apollo, the light-darter, descend to the realm of Hades,

Only over the Earth hovers his gold-dropping car.

8.

Didst thou notice just now that rattle of sash at the window ?

On its hinge turned the door, yet at the sill is no guest.

Also the pan on the fire slightly tipped, and in it the water

Quivered from some hidden touch with rapid shudders of fear.

List ! a low heavy rumble that rolls far away in the distance—

Then it dies with a gasp, in a faint mutter of wrath ;

Pray, what is it ? To thee I shall tell the truth undistorted,

Though I love not to think what I now feel I must speak ;

But thou must know what is here: That was Seismos, the God of the

Earthquake,

Who just turned on his side in a wild frenzy of dreams ;

For he is still here beneath us, and often he gives us a warning

That he feverish is, restless for deeper revenge.

When he turns in his bed, he rumples the earth like a cover :

Just at present he sleeps under this quilt of the ground,

And in his dream he grasps it and wrinkles it oft till it tremble :

Rigid Parnassian tops roll like the waves of the sea,

And the rock-pillared plane of the earth at his touch is as water :

Even its billows' low roar was the dull sound thou hast heard.

Once, it is said, long ago he in person rose up from these mountains,
 Huge was his visage of stone, wrinkled with many a rift,
 Mighty the brawn of his arm, his legs had the totter of hill-tops :
 Round him a barbarous blast swept from the wilds of the North,
 Temples were sunk in the earth, the Gods disappeared in the tempest,
 Since then our Delphi has been nought but the film of a dream.
 Even my days—said she—reach back to a year when he smote us,
 All of us fled from our homes, many were dragged to his cave.
 Since this spell of his ire, he feverish sleeps in his chamber,
 Still again he will rise for in his heart he is wroth,—
 Wroth at our Delphian God and wroth at our Delphian sunshine,
 Both he would sink into night where he has sway mid the rocks.—
 Elpinike, where is thy basket?—cease thy foreboding,
 Glorious Apollo has come, peering just out of the clouds;—
 Wait till Seismos arrive of himself, do not bring him beforehand;
 Down to the Olives we haste, great will the crop be to-day.

9.

See this rock that is lying here in the midst of the village;
 'Tis as large as a house, rugged and sharp are its sides.
 Surly and ugly it lies, crouched down in the street like a watch-dog
 That will not stir from his place however much we may coax.
 So we all when we enter our hamlet, have to go round it;
 Graze but the edges of flint, see, you are bitten by fangs.
 Whence the intruder, you ask? Look upward to yon craggy summit
 Overhanging the town, thence you will see it was broke;
 For the rift is still fresh at the point where the cliff was sundered,

And this fragment would fit were it but placed on that break :
 Now with its mass of huge ruin it stops up the entrance to Delphi
 For the stranger who seeks in his long journey our town.
 But for us dwellers it is a dark threat as well as a hindrance,
 Hinting of chaos and death which were once rolled from the steep—
 Hither hurled by a God, by the dark-minded, rough-handed Seismos,
 Down on the hamlet in sleep at the still middle of night.
 That dire moment, oh friend, I still can distinctly remember,
 As my father me clasped from the soft rugs where I lay
 Wrapped in the folds of sweet slumber and cradled by beautiful visions :
 Quickly he bore me away, naked and bruised in limb.
 Up to that time I had lived an harmonious sport of existence,
 Now my life lies in twain, cleft by a horrible hour.—
 Thus Elpinike was speaking as she came out of the Olives,
 And with a shudder she brushed past the rough rock in the path.
 Certain it is that barbarous Seismos was angry at Delphi,
 Seeking to whelm the whole town into his rocky domains ;
 For the broad earth there surged like a wave or whirled like an eddy,
 Mountains quivered above smit by the hand of the God ;
 To and fro like a pendulum swung he lofty Phloubouki,
 Crags he tore off in his wrath, hurling them down on the roofs.
 Fifty people were lost then, but the Greek maiden was rescued,
 Elpinike was saved, dowered with beauty divine ;
 Even Seismos, the brute, with rapture was seized, or with pity
 At her beauteous distress, and let her flee from his grasp.
 Now I tremble with terror and love as I think of her danger,
 And with a fervor more deep to my embrace her I clasp ;

Temples are buried, houses are crushed, whole peoples have perished—
But the Greek maiden survives, fair Elpinike still lives ;
And when the morn has touched her soft eye with its finger of roses,
Down to the Olives she speeds, singing a hymn on her way ;
The glad stream of her notes I wander along to the well-head,
Beakers of pearls there I dip out of the fountain of song.

10.

Many the deeds of wickedness that are recorded of Seismos ;
But the one which is worst I shall relate to thee now—
He tried to ravish Castalia. Under her fountain
The fast earth he quaked, sought to break up to her bed,
And to bear her away as once Proserpine from Enna
Was borne off by a God to the Tartarean realm.
But our good mother Earth was firm and refused him a passage,
Nor to his blows did she yield though she was sorely assailed.
Then he filled the fair lap of the Nymph with stones from the mountain,
Hurled from the summit above till she was lost to the sight,
Clasped in the rugged embraces of Seismos, of rock-hearted Seismos :
Still her low wail we heard and her clear tears bubbled out,
So that we knew where she was, revealed by the sigh of her waters,
And we rescued her thence when the old brute fell asleep.
Still she is fair as she rests in her bed though bruised by the Titan,
And a low music she makes with her transparent sweet song,
When on the pebbles she dances away down into the valley
Where the Olives are seen—thither she hies with her stream.

11.

Yet I am pained when I think how many a beautiful maiden
In that convulsion was lost—lost to us all evermore.
Oh the fair forms that lie in the cold embraces of Seismos,
That would ravish the eye as they proceed to the dance,
Festively dressed in white linen robes of gracefulest flexure,
Moving in concord their limbs to the soft waving of sounds,
Fragrantly breathed on by Muses from near Parnassian summits—
One harmonious voice they would become in the soul.
Little use can it be to seek for them since the dark giant
Has devoured their forms or has them bitten to shreds.
Even those whom after long labor we rescued, were mangled
By his rude hand of rock till but a fragment they lay.
But they are gone from our view, buried deep in the caverns of Seismos,
Lost to Apollo's abode, temple of beauty and light.
Who would not weep for them?—Hold thy kindred tears, Elpinike;
Thou dost remain on our Earth, still too the Olives remain;
Thy bright eyes now reflect all that ever was lost in fair Hellas,
In thee I see all its maids, Helen herself I behold.
One is enough, I tell thee, one is far better than many—
If only thee I can win, then I have won in thee all.

CYCLET FOURTH.

1.

Calmly has Phoebus laid down his bright shield 'gainst the top of the
mountain,

As in the West he descends, clad in his armor of gold ;
Now he commences to cast off his mail for a plunge in the ocean,
Like a warrior on high, weary with spoils of the day ;
Radiant Delphi he leaves for a time and bright Elpinike,
While the afternoon sheen slowly is swooning to eve.
Hark ! there rises a sullen low moan from the tops of the Olives :
People are beating the fruit down with a pitiless rod.
So the hapless young trees must surrender the stores of their branches,
Scourged by the hand of harsh fate, stript of their glory and pride.
Many a leaf in a slow, sad whirl to the ground now is falling,
Quits unwilling the twig where it could sport all day.
Many a branch, too, full of fresh juices and tender, is broken
By the rude blows that fall on the bright head of the tree.
Even the limbs are lopped by the knife and are borne to the village,
Where in the hearth they are cast, quickly to ashes are burnt.
So there remains of the merry new dance that took place in the tree-
tops,
Nought but the dust of the pyre that in the chimney is left.

As I walk through the trees of the orchard, a tear will keep dropping
When I think of the fate which my young Olives has smit.
Nor can I tell what there is in the air of to-day that affects me ;
Always I melt at some view, joining fair youth to decay.
What are these fragments of stone ? Sarcophagus, broken to pieces,
Which I stumble against as they lie strown in my path.
Here mid the fallen green branches and leaves is the hollow stone
casket
Where a young body once lay, torn from its parents' fond arms ;
And in the midst of the Olives, under the sport of the leaflets,
Urns were once placed in the rock, holding sweet youth and its love.
But the stone still remains, though long since has perished the treasure,
Fate refuses return by an unchanging decree ;
Nor is Nature, methinks, to her children wholly impartial,
Some she recalls to her breast, others forever she spurns.
Seasons depart and return with delight to the Delphian hill-side,
Disappear for a time but are restored with new birth ;
High Parnassus, propped on its pillars, knows no mutation,
Though for the summer it change merely its vestment of snow ;
Evergreen are the pines that slope down the sides of the mountain,
While the leaf of the bush hints, when it falls, the new bud ;
Still too Castalia is here—the perennial musical runnel,
Singing the same happy strain heard by the poets of old ;
But, ah youth, the fairest, supremest blossom of Nature
Passes away at its bloom by irreversible law ;
Man, the top of creation decays, and soon drops into ashes—
Flung by time on the earth as a mere handful of dust.

What is fairest must die, its place is soon filled by another,
While there endures the rude rock ages on ages the same.
Thus have perished the youths and thus have perished the Olives,
But not thus shall I die, if my behest be obeyed ;
For a testament have I bequeathed with the single provision :
Plant a young Olive or two over my grave by the rill ;
Then I cannot but think I shall wake to the joy of the leaflets,
As I lie in repose under my blanket of earth ;
Or if I sleep, I shall dream once more the sweet dreams of my lifetime,
When I roamed through the trees, sporting with image and song.
But the Olive there planted, I know, will rejoice to spread o'er me,
Through the soil it will send rootlets to wreathe me in love ;
With the sap I shall rise, and the tree I shall render immortal,
For my deathless soul shall I imbreathe in the leaves ;
There they forever will sport in the golden network of sunbeams,
Just as I saw them of old as I lay down by the stream.

2.

True it is, Elpinike, of me, thou faithful observer—

What thou hast said with a laugh, I must confess with a sigh :
Silvery hairs have begun to intrude on the slant of my temples,
With their dark comrades they stay winding in subtle embrace ;
Nor can they be any longer expelled by the hand of rude power,
For their sum is too great, so they defiant remain.
Many a wrinkle has furrowed deeply the field of my forehead,
Running aslant and across—marks by my life branded there ;
Many a channel spreads out like a fan from the lake of my eyelids,

Passages cut through my cheeks by the fierce tempest and flood;
Often, I tell thee, have they been filled with hot torrents of sorrow
When the dark cloud of fate burst o'er my head in the air.
Never again will these channels be smoothed from my visage, oh never!
Like the fair rose of youth which I behold in thy face;
Worn too deep in the storm they have been to be now leveled over,
Traces will always remain where the wild current once swept.
Still, Elpinike, like thee I shall bloom in spite of my body,
Richer shall be, too, the yield from the deep furrows of life,
Golden forever the stream shall flow through the tear-riven channel,
E'en from the wounds of the tree buds shall burst forth to the sun.
For the glow of thy youth I shall hand thee sweet draughts of my fancy,
And for the flash of thine eyes shall I throw sparkles of words;
With the red morn in thy cheek shall I mingle the gold of my evening,
And with thy youthful embrace now I shall match a young dream.
For my soul's latest garland exchange thy body's sweet poem,—
I too fresh flowers shall wreath while there is life in this frame.
Know that age is transformed into youth by Love and the Muses,
And though Time crisp the flesh, Poesy blossoms eterne.
Look at this aged Olive, beneath which now we are sitting,
Centuries long have sought vainly to blast its young life.
Twisted and knotted and bent in all ways by the winds and the tempests,
E'en full of holes is the stock, and it is hollow within.
Here it was cruelly struck by an axe in the hands of a peasant,
There a branch it once lost, dearer, methinks, than itself;
Nay, it has once been rifted in twain from the top to the bottom
In some violent storm sent from above by the Gods.

Still it is giving forth branches and shoots from its body so shattered,
E'en on its sears you may see sprouts leaping out of the bark,
And it buries its wounds in an overgrowth smooth of new tissue,
Still their place can be told by the fresh rind and the buds.
Youthful its head of silver-green leaves rises up in the orchard,
No one would think of its age, were the old trunk not beheld.
Every branch too is laden above with a rich crop of Olives :
Far more it bears of the fruit than the young tree in the soil ;
For out of each ancient fibre of wood shoots upward a sapling,
Till around the hoar stem dances a cluster of youths
With the thousandfold laugh of the leaves and the limbs on the hill-side :
'Tis a hymn, you would say, sung by Parnassian choirs.
Tree of the Muses, thyself into youth eternally changing,
Even thy age is the soil in which is nourished thy bloom,
And the older thou growest, and the more wrinkled thy body,
The more sprouts seem to spring from the rich fibre of years.
Such may I be—age into youth forever transforming,
Till the old trunk when it falls shall be borne off to the pyre.

3.

Not every day does Apollo smile on the hill-side of Delphi,
But he covers his face in the dark folds of the clouds ;
For he has two garments—the white one of youth and of radiance,
And another one grained in the deep colors of night.
From the second he shakes out the showers and sprinkles the Olives :
Then I am driven to roof, while Elpinike remains
Out in the storm at her work, and sings to the fall of the raindrops

Melodies sweet of her soul, though all the Olives be wet.
There in the cabin I couch on a rug alongside of the fireplace,
Look at the blaze and think—think of the maid in the rain.
But as I sit there alone, Apollo rises within me,
Bright is the form of the God, mildly serene is his glance,
Proud is the lip though and high is the tread of the slayer of Python,
And from his body divine sparkles ambrosial youth.
Of a sudden each hidden dark chamber within me is lighted,
And a new sunrise I have all to myself in the hut.
Thus he to me familiarly talks in tones of fair promise :
“Though unseen by thine eye, do not suppose I am lost ;
For I oft leave the sky to rise in the hearts of my people,
Often I change my abode here from without to within.
He knoweth not my true worship who can not carry my sunshine
Through the time of dark days that I insert in the bright ;
For the world I have built out of layers of clouds and of sunlight,
Although man I have made only of beams, if he will.
Often the heavens must darken and tempests will bury my visage,
But my boon thou hast not till thou art Phoebus thyself.
Look now under the Olives, thine own Elpinike is busy
In the fierce rain, still she sings—sings in the storm of her love.
She my true worshipper is, for she bears my face in her bosom,
So that wherever she stays, there I am shining all day.

4.

The last evening it was that I saw Elpinike at Delphi :

Softly her words in mine ear throbbed the low strain of a hymn
After I had come home and laid down on my rugs at the hearthstone :

There I lay down by myself, filled with her musical speech,
Always my thoughts were lingering over her tones and her glances,
Till by degrees I had strayed into the realm of the dream ;
Then each wandering fancy was buoyed with the wish of my waking,
And each hope of my heart turned at its birth to be true ;
Every image in sleep was full of the glimpses of daytime,
And what I thought of awake changed to a vision by night.

For I dreamed I had borne far away divine Elpinike,

Out of her bright Greek home over the breadth of the sea ;
So infatuate had I become to possess of her beauty

That the Delphian rocks could I without her not leave.
Then I led the Parnassian queen along in my journey,

Joyous we turned from the Dawn glimmering faint on the heights,
Toward the Evening we fled on the fire-winged chariot of Hesper,

Where are the garden and trees hanging with apples of gold,
Which long ago were by Poets beheld from the top of Parnassus,

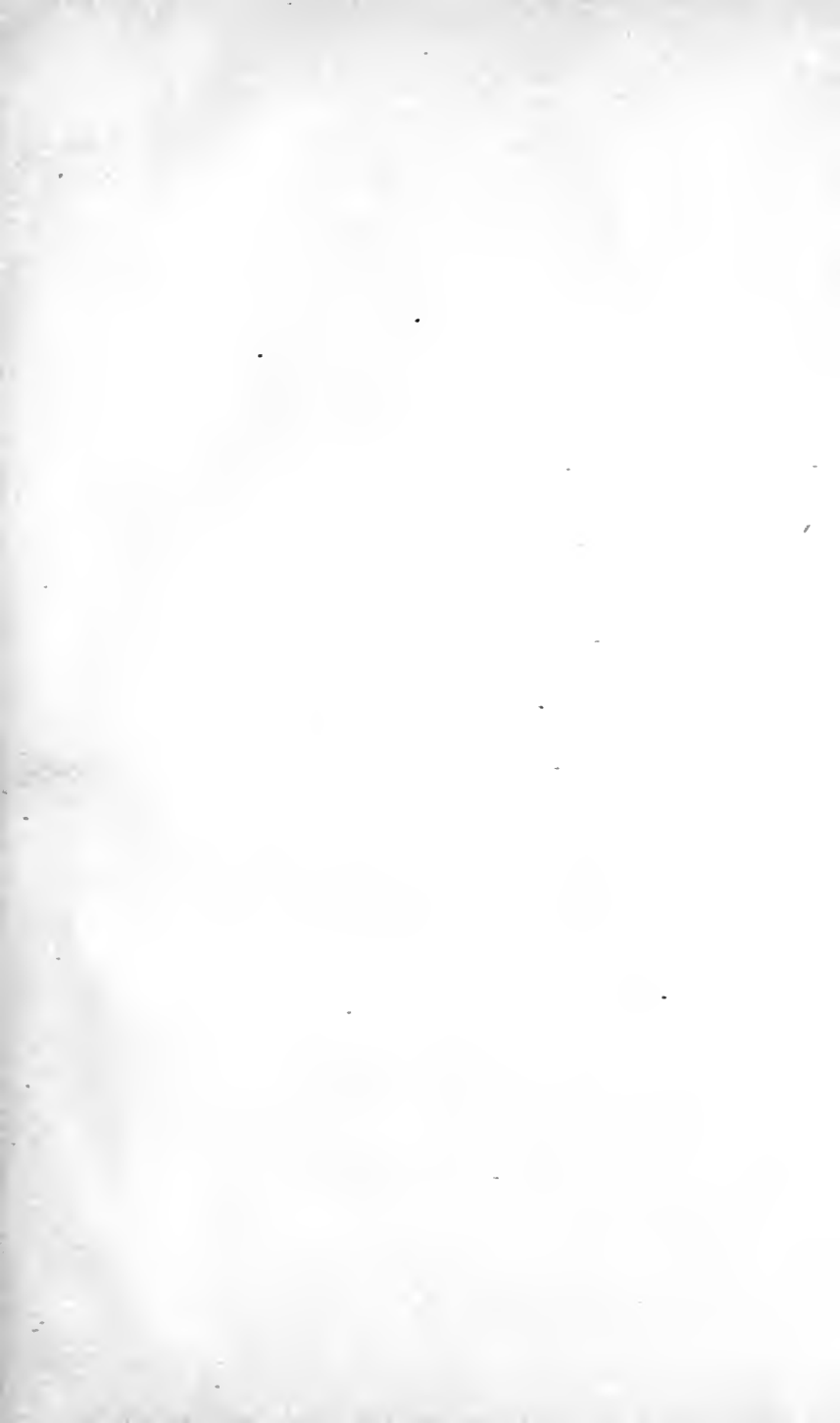
Like an island of dreams floating Olympian fruits,
As it lay far off in the West mid the sheen of Apollo :

Now the presage is true and Elpinike has come.
There in my land by the sunset I built her a home, a new temple,
That she might have an abode fit for a Goddess of old ;
And I built it of whitest and purest of far-glancing marble,

Round it I drew a bright frieze leaping with forms of the feast,
While the roof was supported by many a glistening column;
Many a sculpture I placed in the fair hall of the fane.
In the beams of the sun how merry the dance of the marbles!
The whole temple did dance as with new lustre it rose.
There it stood on the banks that hold the great Father of Waters,
Monster huge of the West—tawny the flow of his mane—
Ever leaping along down his deep-delved path to the sea-caves
Where he doth rest from his race mid his sleek dolphins and calves.
Smeared is his face with the clay of each land that he laves in his passage,
Cloudy with turmoil his brow as he defiantly rolls,
Rearing his head from the stream, he shakes his muddy old chaplet,
In some anger he seems ever to hurry along.
Hitherto he is said to have been the terror of Muses,
And they have fled from his banks, shrieking in fear or disgust.
Still there boldly I built a Greek fane to mine own Elpinike,
And I installed her within, that of my house she be queen.
Joyous and faithful she sped with me over the continents mighty,
Over the ocean she passed, neither she flinched nor she tired;
Soon a new Hellas she found, and a new Parnassian garden
Filled with the fragrance of flowers grown in Apollo's domain.
There she was happy—and in her new home by the side of the River
Always her glances serene tokened her loveliest mood;
Robed too she was in the folds; when she moved through the mansion
of marble,
Graces followed her train, strewing their wealth as she passed;
And on the shore where raged that turbulent God of the River

Then she attuned the sweet hymn, calming the wrath of the wave ;
Filled was her strain of delight with the ancient Delphian measures,
That Castalia had throbbed from her clear source long ago,
As she went dancing adown the green hill through the orchard and
vineyard,

Winding in choruses bright, garlands of maidens and youths.
There Elpinike, with glances all golden, illumed her new temple,
And with the voice of the Muse often she sang as of old.







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